CRITICAL THEORY AND POPULAR CULTURE: PREPARING SCHOOL LEADERS FOR THE EMERGING BIRACIAL MAJORITY

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ABSTRACT

Quamesha Whitted-Miller: Critical Theory and Popular Culture: Preparing School Leaders for
the Emerging Biracial Majority
(Under the direction of James Trier)

Since the implementation of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision, school

leaders have been tasked with the challenge of mitigating the historical and societal tensions that

have existed between blacks and whites that developed during slavery. Despite the integration of

blacks and white students within the same school building, American public schools continue to

struggle with inclusiveness of all groups of students, as evidenced by the lack of success of

certain minority groups (English, 2002; Shields, 2004). As a result, several diversity initiatives

and reform efforts have been implemented (Sleeter, 2012; Wardle, 2000). Moreover, many

educational leadership programs have begun adopting social justice frameworks in an effort to

develop transformative leaders. Even with these attempts to recognize and include all groups of

students, black-white biracial students are rarely included in educational research and literature

(Root, 1996, 2001; Wardle, 2007; Williams, 2009, 2011). This dissertation was an inquiry into

the pedagogical use of popular culture, in the form of film—specifically films with biracial

characters and in some instances other video texts—for the purpose of engaging school leaders

(principals and assistant principals) in critically reflective activities that merge theory and

popular culture. The theories that the researcher employed are Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding

and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Transformative leadership strategies are embedded throughout

the pedagogical project, which serve as the primary justification for the dissertation format that

results in an authentic product that consists of a 3-day professional learning experience.

To my grandmother: "Mama," you are all that I am and all that I desire to be.
This "book" is dedicated to you, because without you, it would have not been possible.

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CHAPTER I: THE EMERGING MAJORITY

Introduction

As a microcosm, public education shares a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding American public—both exerting influence on the national collective, and yet yielding to society's will. Since the implementation of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision, school leaders have been tasked with the challenge of mitigating the historical and societal tensions that have existed between blacks and whites that developed during slavery. Despite the integration of blacks and white students within the same school building, American public schools continue to struggle with inclusiveness of all groups of students, as evidenced by the lack of success of certain minority groups (English, 2002; Shields, 2004). A significant problem is the persistent black-white achievement gap and gaps between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students (English, 2002; Shields, 2004, 2009). As a result, various diversity initiatives and reform efforts have been implemented (Sleeter, 2012; Wardle, 2000). Moreover, many educational leadership programs have begun adopting social justice frameworks in an effort to develop transformative leaders. Even with these attempts to recognize and include all groups of students, black-white biracial students are rarely included in educational research, literature, and other academic works (Root, 1996, 2001; Wardle, 2007; Williams, 2009, 2011). Because student race continues to play a role in the nation's opinion of public schools in documents such as *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman & United States Department of Health, 1966), *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), it is paramount that educators turn their gaze toward understanding the influence of the historical and

social context that surrounds public schools. American racial history is complex, but even more complex is the experiences of biracial people.

Black-White Biracial Defined

Merriam-Webster (2017) defined the term biracial as "of, relating to, or involving members of two races" and "having parents from two races." Delgado and Stefancic (2012) defined "biracial identity" as the "identity of a person whose heritage or culture encompasses more than one category" (p. 156). The term *biracial* has been used by many researchers for the purpose of labeling children with parents who are of differing races (Baxley, 2008; Brandell, 1988; Nishimura, 1995; Wardle, 1992, 2000). Examples can include black-white, Native American-black, Latino-white, and Asian-black combinations (Baxley, 2008; Nishimura, 1995; Wardle, 1992). In fact, the term biracial could be used to describe a person of any two races. Wardle (1992) contended that "the obvious definition of a biracial child is a child from one black biological parent and one white biological parent" (p. 163). Moreover, most existing researchers have focused on the biracial children from African American and European American parents (Nishimura, 1995). Additionally, Wardle (2000) used both *biracial* and *multiracial* to discuss children whose parents cross traditional U.S. racial categories" and "biethnic and multiethnic to discuss children whose parents cross traditional ethnic categories" (p. 11). In addition to the term biracial, researchers have used several terms interchangeably to refer to this group of individuals. Examples are *multiracial, interracial,* and *mixed-race* (Lopez, 2003; Root, 1996; Wardle, 1992; Williams, 2009). For the purposes of this dissertation, biracial is defined as individuals who are black-white biracial, meaning that they have one black parent and one white parent. My purpose for limiting this work to black-white biracial people is based on my personal experiences, which I will outline in the next section.

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Researcher Positionality

Growing up in North Carolina, I became race conscious at an early age. In my rural community outside of the city limits, the color line and the racial boundaries between blacks and whites were very distinct. In fact, I can recall my family members engaging in race-related conversations when I was very young. My initial view of the world was through a racial lens, involving a polarizing separation of blacks and whites. Although my current lifestyle is different from that of my childhood, my view of the world and lens through which I understand it still rests with race. My position in this research is personal and biased in that I am the mother of a biracial child, a son; however, my interest in biracial people occurred long before I thought of marrying my white husband. It was in elementary school when I first came to know a black-white biracial person. She and her family, which consisted of her white mother and two younger monoracial white siblings, moved into my community. To me she was intriguing not so much because of who she was, but what she represented. My black-and-white view of the world was interrupted with a gray area that did not fit nicely into my understanding of the way things were. I will describe more of my positionality as it relates to schooling and education in Chapter IV.

Increase in Biracial Population

It is well documented that the biracial population is the United States is growing at record rates (Lopez, 2003; Nuttgens, 2010; Wardle, 2000). Births of biracial babies are increasing faster than the number of monoracial babies, and this increase is occurring across all racial groups (Root, 1996; Wardle, 1992). The biracial population has steadily increased in America over the past 30 years (Roth, 2005). Baxley (2008) reported that "over the last 30 years, biracial individuals have become one of the fastest growing populations in the United States" (p. 230).

In 2000, the United States Census allowed individuals to identify as more than one race for the first time. The data indicated that 25% of the total population was a race other than white; amongst this segment of people was the inclusion of multiracial persons (Williams, 2009). Additionally, seven million people identified as being more than one race, and over one half of this number acknowledged being biracial (both black and white; Williams, 2009). Jones and Bullock (2012) noted that the black-white biracial population increased by over one million people when comparing the 2000 and 2010 Census results, a 134 percent increase. Overall this population identifying as more than one race grew from 6.8 million to 9 million. Every county in the United States had participants who self-identified as being of two or more races. Consequently, as the general biracial population has increased, so has the number of biracial students attending public schools (Baxley, 2008; Nishimura, 1995; Williams, 2011).

The literature related to the increase of biracial individuals typically cites several major historical events that contribute to this growth (Wardle, 1992; 2000). Some of those events include the repealing of anti-micegenation laws such as the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Civil Rights Movement, and the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court decision (Root, 2001; Roth, 2005; Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins, & Markus, 2012). The Racial Integrity Act and the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case both involved anti-miscegenation laws. Miscegenation is a term that has been used since the 19th century to refer to the mixing of different races through marriage, cohabitation, intercourse, or reproduction. Until nearly the 1970s, as many as 13 of the United States had laws deeming miscegenation illegal. Anti-miscegenation laws officially endured until the 1967 United States Supreme Court ruling in the *Loving v. Virginia* case. This case involved an interracial married couple, Richard and Mildred Loving, a white man and black woman. Despite being married in Washington, D.C., the

Virginia residents were taken from their Virginia home and arrested as a result of their state's anti-miscegenation laws. Due to the legislative and social dissuasion of miscegenation, coupled with the implementation of hypodescent (the so-called "one drop rule") for nearly the entire history of this nation, it is likely that there are more biracial people than the data suggest (Williams, 2011). The practice of hypodescent results in the involuntary classification of children of parents from different races to the less socially privileged group.

The synthesis of history and its complex relationship with race filters down into the everyday realities facing school leaders as they manage the complex and idiosyncratic student, parent, and staff cultures underlying any particular learning institution. Existing efforts to engage school leaders in effective practices of change have paved an important road of progress; however, these efforts remain inadequate for fueling the degree of change necessary to advance the achievement and educational rights of all students. As the important body of scholarly contributions grows, so too will the opportunities to better advocate for students, especially the ever-increasing population of biracial students that will soon dominate the landscape of American school-age children. It is imperative that future scholars provide feasible strategies to prepare school leaders for success in working with biracial populations in an era where limited resources such as time and money surface as realities that must be openly confronted.

The Research Plan

Many researchers in the body of literature around the topic of transformative leadership have spoken to the need for unorthodox approaches to educational leadership programs, professional learning experiences, and social justice strategies for school leaders that are committed to equity for all students (Brown, 2004; Capper, 1989; Cooper, 2009; Dantley, 2003; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Israel & Fine, 2012; Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Shields, 2003,

2004, 2009, 2010; Weiner, 2003). As I explained earlier, I acknowledge a personal interest in the progress related to equitable treatment and proper acknowledgement of biracial students in public schools. Additionally, by profession, I currently serve as a high school assistant principal and profess a commitment to social justice and equity for all students beyond academic/scholarly engagement. The nontraditional active design of this dissertation for the purpose of completing the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership requirements is one example of how I accept the challenge of genuine engagement in assisting school leaders in shifting their mindset and practices from maintaining the status quo in the form of well-managed schools to disrupting the status quo with critically reflective practices.

Prior to my graduate studies, during my time as a classroom teacher, I often used films and YouTube videos to assist students in their learning of concepts and skills. My use of film was similar to what James Trier (2006) described as "teaching with media" (p. 434). For example, Trier shared an example of showing scenes from a play while reading a play as "incorporating media texts with one's teaching" (p. 434). Although I had an interest in using films as pedagogical texts as a teacher, Dr. Fenwick English can be credited for confirming this practice during my enrollment in courses for my masters and current doctoral program of studies. English and Steffy (1997) posited that "as a teaching medium, film is especially powerful in several ways" (p. 107).

This dissertation is an inquiry into the pedagogical use of popular culture, in the form of film—specifically films with biracial characters and in some instances other video texts—for the purpose of engaging school leaders (principals and assistant principals) in critically reflective activities that merge theory and popular culture. The theories I will employ are Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Transformative leadership strategies are

embedded throughout the pedagogical project and serve as the primary justification for the dissertation format that results in an authentic product. This inquiry and pedagogical approach is similar to that taken up by educational researchers (English & Steffy, 1997; Giroux, 1993; Tillman & Trier, 2007; Trier, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d, 2013). Similar to this work, Adams (2011) conceptualized how he might discuss school films with preservice teachers. In the next section, I will outline the format of the remainder of this dissertation, which culminates with the conceptualization of the pedagogical project in the form of a 3-day learning experience for school leaders.

In Chapter II, I provide a review of the sparse research that exists about the schooling of biracial students and summarize the information, specifically the history and major themes in the literature about biracial people. I also present a brief review of CRT literature. In Chapter III, I discuss some of the research that supports the pedagogical use of films, the methods conducted during my search of available biracial films, Encoding/Decoding theory, and my personal analysis of six biracial films. I begin Chapter IV with a brief introduction of some of the relevant transformative leadership literature. Chapters V, VI, and VII detail the pedagogical project. Each chapter is dedicated to one day of the 3-day professional learning experience for school leaders. In Chapter VIII, I outline future research directions that I will follow in the years to come. As mentioned earlier, this dissertation is not outlined in a traditional format. It is important to note that I purposely positioned the literature about the critical theories in the chapter to which it was most relevant to assist with ease in reading.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A number of converging factors have limited researchers' ability to conduct a literature review on biracial individuals. Most notably, biracial individuals in the United States previously lacked the ability to formally identify as such. Prior to the 2000 Census, biracial individuals were forced to self-identify as only one race, an enduring practice that structurally and symbolically perpetuated the one drop rule. The 2000 Census first enabled biracial people to select more than one race as a means for identification (Townsend et al., 2012). This lack of identification is apparent as researchers have rarely acknowledged the existence of biracial people (Brandell, 1988; Gibbs, 1987; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993). Brandell (1998) stated that "in spite of the sizeable number of biracial children born to black-white couples, this group has received relatively scant attention in literature" (p. 176). Educational research results involving biracial students have not deviated from this lack of representation in the literature (Williams, 2009, 2011).

Of the scant literature that exists within multiple disciplines, the most popular research topic is racial identity development (Adler, 1987; Brandell, 1988; Brunsma, 2006; Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Gibbs, 1987; Herring, 1992; Kerwin et al., 1993; Poston, 1990; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, 2004; Root, 1990, 1996). The biracial literature that directly relates to schools is primarily found within the counseling discipline (Benedetto & Olinsky, 2001; Harris, 2002, 2006; Herring, 1992; Moss & Davis, 2008; Nishimura, 1995). The overall theme of this literature perpetuates a deficit approach to the

biracial school population and the need for school counselors to be prepared for the unique complications that emerge from their race. Consistent with the claims mentioned earlier, even the school counseling related research is minimal, with only three identified studies conducted. These studies included a case study used to illustrate strategies provided for use with biracial students (Moss & Davis, 2008), a pilot study evaluating school counselors' perceptions of biracial students (Harris, 2002), and a study utilizing a subset of data of 122 African American school counselors taken from an original sample of 328 to assess their perception of biracial students (Harris, 2006). Also present within this limited body of literature is the topic of racial identity development, which tends to surface in most biracial literature. Although I recognize that this literature is important, it remains outside of the scope of this dissertation.

Following the biracial literature housed within the school counseling domain are scholarly articles and research included within peer reviewed journals and publications. For example, Baxley's (2008) "'What are You?' Biracial Children in the Classroom" appeared in the Summer 2008 edition of *Childhood Education*, the official Journal of the Association for Childhood Education International. In this brief article, the author provided resources such as a list of reference books, picture books, adolescent books, and websites that teachers can use to "incorporate culturally responsive practices in their classrooms" (p. 232). The author further identified classroom teaching strategies that support biracial students. In addition to sharing information about the expansion of the biracial population, Baxley explored biracial identity development and history.

Of the most significant peer reviewed articles surrounding biracial students, Williams (2009; 2011) specifically reviewed the literature related to black-white biracial students in American schools by conducting an exhaustive review of the predominate education journals.

Williams (2009) noted the overall absence of scholarly research; as a result, the researcher reverted to a variety of literature to explore the schooling experiences of black-white biracial students. Williams wrote that "an exhaustive search left me with five research studies on the psychological adjustment of biracial children, four studies on parental influence, and two studies on multiracial school-age children" (p. 777).

Williams's (2011) publication *When Gray Matters More Than Black or White: The Schooling Experiences of Black-White Biracial Students* is significant for three primary reasons. First, it revealed a critical lack of education research relating to biracial students, which is significant in light of the fact that this is one of the fastest growing school population segments. Secondly, Williams's research reflected the absence of any existing education literature surrounding biracial students that deals with academic achievement on standardized tests, socioeconomic status, and suspension rates, all of which are factors that likely impact the achievement gap. Thirdly, Williams revealed that within the scholarly body of work surrounding biracial students, the majority of published material centered around a deficit model that effectively perpetuated negative concepts such as "psychological adjustment."

Wardle's (2000) article, entitled "Children of Mixed Race—No Longer Invisible," revealed information about biracial individuals and their current versus ideal situations in schools. In this article, Wardle provided recommendations for the increasing biracial population as it relates to teachers, assessing and improving the curriculum, multicultural education, modifying ethnic and racial celebrations, addressing harassment, and promoting anti-bias activities. While Wardle's December 1999/January 2000 article appeared in the well-respected publication *Educational Leadership*, the flagship publication for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), it is lacking in peer review and is thus considered non-

scholarly. Despite the aforementioned limitations, this publication typically features authors who are experts in the field with the objective of practically disseminating information within the education trade. The author did cite scholarly articles and the article contains several references, making it relevant in the context of an overall limited body of availability.

As the previous summary of educational research relating to biracial students revealed, significant limitations within American society have worked together to limit scholarly research. It is therefore pertinent to underscore the relevant history of United States race in order to understand the predicament underscoring the limited volume of contemporary biracial student literature. I therefore acknowledge that this literature review has diverged from the more traditional review of the research—because such literature is almost nonexistent—into a discussion of the gaps and a statement of the research that will be conducted. This is because the current dissertation will result in a pedagogical project that will eventually lead to academic journal articles, which will contribute to the body of literature.

A Historical Contextualization of Biracial Identification

There is a complex history involving the identification of biracial people. The practice of the one drop rule still endures, although informally, in most areas of modern society. The one drop rule was once a well-known societal norm supported by legal practices. Such laws mandated that a biracial child be identified as the racial group of the parent of subordinate status; thus, any known African ancestry required the person to be identified as black (Davis, 1991; Rockquemore, 1998; Roth, 2005; Williamson, 1980). Baxley (2008) noted that prior to the 1920s, the U.S. Census contained a "mulatto" and a "pure Negro" category (p. 230). This author added that during the 1920s and 1960s, the two were dropped and replaced with "black" to further justify the one drop rule.

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Slavery 1619 – 1865

Slavery in the United States brought the dehumanization and exploitation of Africans for economic and social avail. Atrocities against slaves are recognized as the most inhumane and racist actions in all of modern history. Expanding upon this notion, Brown (2001) suggested that Blacks were considered inferior and subhuman during the Colonial period in America (2001). in contrast, Spickard (1989) asserted that "America was founded, in one sense, upon a vision of intermarriage" (p. 4). The socially contrived origins of oppression failed to deter the various physical and emotional interactions that unfolded between white slave masters and black female slaves. According to Brown (2001), these sexual acts—primarily rape—often led to the birth of biracial children. Plantation life for many black female slaves consisted of repeated rape by plantation masters, their sons, overseers, and neighbors. Authors such as Spickard (1989) have contended that throughout this period, "small numbers of legitimate interracial unions existed alongside widespread concubinage and forced sex" (pp. 235-236). While biracial children were often the product of exploitation, consensual relationships resulting in biracial children also arose due to circumstances that allowed individuals to live and work in close proximity. For example, Brown (2001) cited that slaves and indentured servants were exploited in agriculture and often worked side-by-side. As a result of such interactions, many individuals became involved in loving relationships that resulted in biracial children. Lythcott-Haims (1994) explained that "Whites and Blacks had been mixing in Africa, Europe, and Asia for eons before Columbus sailed the western ocean, and they mixed in Latin America for a century before either White Englishmen or Black Africans came to the Virginia shore" (p. 533).

Intertwined in the fabric of American slavery is the story of sexual slavery for biracial women. *Placage* is derived from the French term and describes the practice of illegitimate

marriages between free mulatto women and slave owners in French and Spanish slave colonies. Oftentimes, these slave owners also had a white wife and maintained two households. The practice of placage was especially popular in New Orleans. New Orleans recognized several different variations of biracial people along the Black-White continuum (Spickard, 1998). It has been noted that many mulatto women were sought after and were sold for much higher rates as mistresses and wives of slave owners. Davis (1991) referenced "fancy girls" and "quadroon balls" to illustrate the fate of select biracial females. Davis' term "fancy girls" described those biracial women forced into becoming "concubines of wealthy white gentleman" in "quadroon balls" where the pretty ones were "auctioned off."

Aside from the examples mentioned, documentation of racial mixing is abundant throughout the body of literature. Despite this widespread practice of rape, concubinage, and interracial unions, the notion of interracial children endured as taboo and sinful throughout American history. Spickard (1998) noted that society rejected interracial relations as early as 1630 when a white Virginia man was "to be soundly whipped" in public "for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a Negro" (p. 238-239). Regardless of their origin, biracial children resulting from interracial unions threatened the social order. As a result, miscegenation laws and hypodescent practices became commonplace in the American society.

Early in the 18th century, a greater amount of Africans were imported into the colonies. Spickard (1998) explained that prior to this influx of African slaves, "White colonists could deal with issues regarding race relations on an ad hoc basis" (p. 238). As a result of fear of revolt and "guilt over slavery," laws were created to keep the White colonists in control of the slave and free Black population. Spickard also noted that an uneven framework of laws and decisions was

gradually erected to inhibit intermarriage by punishing the White or Black spouse, the person who married them, or all three. Gallagher and Lippard (2014) defined *miscegenation* as "the mixing, interbreeding, sexual union, marriage, or cohabitation of people of different races or ethnic groups, especially whites and nonwhites" (p. 793). According to Gallagher and Lippard, the term originated on a pamphlet from an anonymous author in 1864. The title of the pamphlet was *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*. Prior to this pamphlet, the term *amalgamation* had been used, but the author of the pamphlet explained that a new term was created to be more specific. This anonymous author also noted that classical Latin *misc* means "to mix" and *genus* means "race" (p. 793). Additionally, Gallagher and Lippard (2014) cited the belief this pamphlet was an effort to sabotage the reelection of President Abraham Lincoln and Republican control of Congress. In the 19th century, a total of 38 states eventually adopted miscegenation laws, with the first being recorded in Maryland as early as 1661 (Brown, 2001).

According to Gallagher and Lippard (2014), *hypodecency* was a widespread legal and social practice. Hypodescent, commonly known as the one drop rule, describes the social assignment of a biological child of parents of different races to the socially inferior race. In the United States, this rule has primarily applied to Blacks, meaning that anyone possessing black blood is characterized as black. The primary purpose of this practice was to maintain a slave labor force and to protect slave owners from their parental obligations to their biracial offspring. Lythcott-Haims (1994) noted Williamson's (1980) work regarding the characterizations of these biracial people on a continuum from white to black. Within this framework anyone containing at least one eighth black blood was considered black. The terms, listed by fractions of black blood

were: "0 = white, ⅛ = octoroon, ¼ = quadroon, ½ = mulatto, ¾ = griffe, ⅞ = sacatra, and 1 = Negro" (p. 535).

As evidence of an emerging trend in which gender bias would prove inferior to racial bias in American society, Brown (2001) explained that in 1662, the Virginia legislature deviated from traditional English law and ruled that biracial children should have the status of their mothers. Given an overarching historical gender bias predominate in nearly all societies throughout history, the ruling's symbolism remained significant because it eventually surrendered the powerful and historical gender biases in exchange for the perpetuation of racial prejudice.

Civil War 1861 – 1865

Despite the widespread racism that permeated the legal, social, economical, and moral threads of American society, the forces of biracial parturition ultimately unfolded in countless contexts. Significant to the progression of biracial individuals during the Civil War era, Brown (2001) wrote about the prominent rise of "the mulatto" in American history, and the author also credited the Civil War for the decline in interracial mixing during this period. Additionally, Davis (1991) recognized large organized and well-funded anti-miscegenation groups such as the Ku Klux Klan for the decline in racial mixing. Such emerging hate groups began to actively engage in direct practices aimed at dividing the races, despite hundreds of years of interracial sexual relations.

Reconstruction 1865 – 1877

Despite the Union's victory freeing the four million enslaved, slavery continued to haunt American history during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction. During the rise of Reconstruction, many biracial individuals attempted to increase their status by creating elite social clubs—effectively separating themselves from darker-skinned blacks. This separation of

blacks and the creation of a black upper class began during slavery with the house slaves and field slaves. During this period of slavery, many of a slave master's children were allowed to labor in the slave master's house as opposed to the field labor. Additionally, these "lighter-skinned house slaves were trained to speak differently and developed different skills than those of the field workers" (Gallagher & Lippard, 2014, p. 133). These experiences allowed them to develop trades and acquire more expedient access to colleges than the field slaves. Sociologist Frazier (1957) published a controversial book titled *Black Bourgeoisie* highlighting the divisions of class in the Black community. Additionally, Graham (2000) published a book *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class,* in which the author provided specific details involving the Black elite and their connections to the social practices during slavery.

Post-Reconstruction Era

Homer Plessy (1862-1925) of *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) was reared in the city of New Orleans, and his parents lived in a "community of free people of color," with most members of "mixed-race descent" who were often referred to as Creoles (Gallagher & Lippard, 2014, p. 942). Plessy was considered "seven-eighths white," and he challenged Louisiana's laws segregating blacks and whites on public transportation. The landmark court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* of 1896 declared that "separate but equal" was constitutional. Tennessee became the first state to make the one drop rule legal in 1910. Many southern states developed similar laws to restrict and undermine the racial status of biracial individuals. Like Homer Plessy, many biracial individuals resemble their white parent; therefore, these laws were deemed necessary to ensure that the biracial people did not benefit from the privileges that may be afforded to them as a result of being mistaken for white.

At the turn of the century, racist laws—specifically, laws intended to target biracial individuals—arose from the United States federal government. Tatum (1997) wrote that "the one-drop rule was institutionalized by the U.S. Census Bureau in the early twentieth century" (p. 169). Tatum further stated that prior to 1920, Negroes were distinguished from mulattoes, but the *mulatto* category was dropped and replaced with *blacks* to define anyone with known traces of African ancestry. Brown (2001) also explained that during the 1920s, a time known as the Harlem Renaissance period, elite social clubs created by black and biracial individuals began to weaken; however, colorism and dissension continued to thrive within the black community, as evidenced by more contemporary examples of exclusionary social clubs such as Jack and Jill, Inc. or The Links. Inc. Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is a national organization. The organization's website describes the mission as "a membership organization of mothers with children ages 2 – 19, dedicated to nurturing future African American leaders by strengthening children through leadership development, volunteer service, philanthropic giving and civic duty." The Links, Inc. is a national organization. According to the organization's website, it "is an international, not-for-profit corporation, established in 1946. The membership consists of nearly 14,000 professional women of color in 283 chapters located in 41 states, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. It is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of extraordinary women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry."

The Harlem Renaissance, a period spanning the 1920s to mid-1930s, was significant and positive as it relates to black culture. First, a notable migration of black Americans took place, in which major Northern metropolitan areas—for example, Harlem—developed as important

cultural epicenters. Secondly, black culture began to surface as a unique genre within nearly all forms of artistic expression. During this period, Harlem became famous for the rise is cultural artistic expression in the form of musicians, artists, photographers, and writers.

Following the conclusion of WWI, the predominance of biracial or multiracial citizens within America was so vast that significant percentages of individuals had little or no capacity with which to accurately interpret their own racial identity. According to Brown (2001), "It is estimated that 30 to 70 percent of African Americans have White relatives in their ancestral history and that a significant proportion of White-identified people have a multiracial background" (p. 18). Meanwhile, racially divisionary government legislation persisted well into the 20th century. The system of racial classification that categorizes a person with any black ancestry as black remained unaltered by the civil rights laws of the 1960s (Brown, 2001, p. 17). The next state to legalize this practice was Virginia in 1924 under the Racial Integrity Act, which was designed to prohibit interracial marriage by expanding upon the anti-miscegenation laws. The Racial Integrity Act required that the race of every person be recorded as white or colored with the application of the one drop rule.

Civil Rights Movement 1960s & *Loving v. Virginia* 1967

These oppressive practices bleed well into the 1960s Civil Rights Era an entire century beyond the legal emancipation. In the context of this paper, it is prudent to define the Civil Rights movement by including a major piece of federal legislation (388 U.S. 1 [1967] that emerged. Brown (2001) explained that during this period, "many interracial people joined blacks in the 1960s Black Power Movement" (p. 18).

The rise in the amount of interracial marriages and biracial births is attributed to the 1960s Civil Rights movement and the *Loving v. Virginia* 1967 Supreme Court decision (Brown,

2001). The implications of the law are relative in scope to the emerging tide of social justice that gripped the United States in such a powerful fashion. In what amounts to a historically novel large-scale social movement, citizens of color united for a common purpose. Whereas social and legislative patterns historically worked to segregate those in the black community with varied skin color, the organic nature of Civil Rights unification was unrivaled in both scope and power. For important reasons, the Civil Rights movement is known as the historical movement that resulted in the most social and political gains for black Americans since Reconstruction. Brown (2001) stated that during "the mid-1980s, a burgeoning of interracial family organizations and literature occurred." During this time, families and organizations representing biracial individuals "became increasingly demanding of a socially and institutionally recognized category that allowed their children to accurately define themselves" (p. 2).

Late Twentieth Century & Twenty-First Century

During the final decades of the 20th century, the need for Civil Rights and related social justice efforts have escaped has younger generations. As recently as May 1983, Louisiana refused to allow a woman and her siblings to define themselves as white despite their white phenotype. In June of 1983, the state of Louisiana amended its law, allowing parents to classify the race of their children as opposed to a doctor or midwife (Tatum, 1997). During that same year, Louisiana repealed a statute that identified everyone having one thirty-second or less of Negro blood as non-white, using terms such as colored, mulatto, black, Negro, Afro-American, quadroon, and other subordinate non-white titles. Brown (2001) stated that "children of black/white interracial couples have struggled with acceptance and racial group membership questions" (p. 1). In 2000, for the first time in the history of the United States Census, individuals were able to identify as more than one race.

The history of biracial people is both relevant and important for school leaders because schools reproduce American values and practices. Steele (1990) stated that "the distinction of race has always been used in American life to sanction each race's pursuit of power in relation to the other" (p. 5). Critical Race Theory is a theory related to transformative leadership and also serves as justification for this project. In this dissertation, I used CRT as a framework for analysis and critique of the racist representations and messages in the biracial films. One of the major tenets of CRT is that racism has become normalized in this society. As I discussed in Chapter I during the researcher's positionality statement, I affirm a worldview that centers around race. In the next section, I will provide a brief literature review of CRT and its central tenets in order to allow the reader to understand the lens in which the author uses to analyze the biracial films in Chapter III, and to create and engage the participants in critical pedagogical activities in Chapter IV.

Critical Race Theory

CRT has origins in legal scholarship that emerged in the late 1970s from Critical Legal Studies (CLS; Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Researchers have noted that CRT is an outgrowth that occurred as a result of legal scholars of color that were discontent with the fact that CLS did not include racism in its critique (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT is a tool that has been used to conceptualize, analyze, and challenge race and racism in modern society (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harris, 1993; Yasso, 2005), including the educational system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The CRT approach involves the interrogation of the racial hierarchy that validates power and privilege within the context of the United States. Critical race theorists are committed to social justice and the disruption of the status quo. Critical race theorists reject the ideas that race

is a biological concept and that racism is only individualistic, instead contending that "race is a social construction, not a biological reality" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 21). Critical race theorists believe that the law, in an effort to preserve white power and privilege, has contributed to the normalizing of racism within societal institutions in the United States.

Most critical race theorists recognize five main tenets, although every critical race theorist may not subscribe to every tenet (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The basic tenets of CRT are (a) the permanence of race and racism and their "intersectionality" with other forms of subordination, (b) the centrality of experiential knowledge, (c) the challenge to dominant ideology, (d) the interdisciplinary perspective, and (e) a commitment to social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997; Yasso, 2002, 2005). Bell (1980) addressed interest convergence, what is often considered an additional sixth tenet. In the next section, I will provide additional detail related to each of the tenets.

The Centrality of Race and Racism

CRT contends that racism in the United States is endemic, ordinary, and a permanent reality of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It is seen as a common and often unquestionable part of American life. CRT asserts that race and racism have contributed to the racial order in the United States. This tenet can be used to examine examining how race and racism serve as the primary concepts in which all institutions operate within in the United States. Critical race theorists seek to "analyze and challenge race and racism in the law and society while recognizing the socially constructed nature of race" (Lynn & Adams, 2002, p. 88). This tenet also recognizes the intersectionality of race and racism with other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexuality.

The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

Critical race theorists support storytelling and privileging the voice of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lopez, 2003). These scholars have asserted that this knowledge of people of color is legitimate and essential in the understanding of racial subordination. This CRT tenet legitimizes family histories, narratives, parables, poems, and other forms of sharing. In Bell's (1995) words, "Critical race theory writing and lecturing is characterized by frequent use of the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary treatment of law, and the unapologetic use of creativity" (p. 899). As a result of the historical silencing of the voices of people of color, the products of this tenet are often referred to as "counter-storytelling." These counter-stories are typically opposite of the master narrative that is created and recognized by the majority.

The Challenge to Dominant Ideology

CRT recognizes white privilege and criticizes and challenges arguments that support objectivity, race neutrality, colorblindness, and meritocracy. Critical race theorists propose that these claims serve the interest of dominant groups with power and privilege. Additionally, there have been "spin-off movements" that include AsianCrit, FemCrit, LatCrit, Queer-Crit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

The Interdisciplinary Perspective

CRT extends beyond legal discipline including women's studies, sociology, film, psychology, history, and many other areas of scholarship (Yosso, 2005). In 1995, CRT was introduced to the field of education by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). Critical race theorists insist on a contextual and historical analysis and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The Commitment to Social Justice

CRT offers a transformative framework to societal challenges related to racial oppression. According to Chadderton (2013), "CRT has a strong commitment to political activism and its overall goal is the eradication of racism as part of the wider objective to eliminate all forms of oppression" (p. 43). Critical race theorists seek to empower minorities and other oppressed groups. These scholars are committed to a social justice agenda to empower marginalized groups and eliminate all forms of subordination.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence is widely documented as a tenet of CRT and has been used as a tool for analysis (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Milner, 2008). Interest convergence is the idea that whites will compromise with the interests of blacks when they align with the interests of whites. Researchers have cited the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision as an example of the tenet of interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Researchers have argued that the United States Supreme Court decision was a result of the converging, on the one hand, of the interests of whites interested in creating a positive appearance internationally, and on the other hand the civil rights interests of blacks. This type of social progress only perpetuates racism, as evidenced by the racially segregated and underfunded schools today (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As Milner (2008) explained, "Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites" (p. 333). The matter of interest convergence typically involves someone in the superior group losing something to the inferior group so that interests converge (Bell, 1980).

A CRT Construct: Whiteness as Property

Although CRT has roots in legal studies, there have been several "spin-off movements" throughout multiple disciplines (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced the concept of CRT to the field of education. Ladson-Billings and Tate advocated for a critical race theory perspective in education by making three arguments: (a) race continues to be significant in the United States; (b) U.S. society is based on property rights, rather than human rights; and (c) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity" (p. 47).

The foundation of the American economy was based on property rights. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described how the Pilgrims used the legal system to justify taking land from Native Americans. Also, due to the unfortunate historical exploitation of blacks as slaves and property of their white owners, in this country, property rights are not only limited to the traditional form of physical property. Being white in the United States has value as it is linked to the certain privileges and power due to society's racial order. CRT views racism in the form of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). This racial order affords whites many of the same advantages and privileges that come with physical property rights.

As a result of the lack of biracial research and biracial literature, I posit that black-white biracial students need attention from educational researchers. The information that supports the rise in black-white births and the complex history between blacks and whites in the United States are two reasons that this research can be helpful when approaching topics such as the achievement gaps. The current biracial research, literature, and surface level recommendations for educators are not enough to prepare school leaders. I therefore designed a critical pedagogical project to begin with the awareness of the increasing biracial population with school leaders.

CHAPTER III: BIRACIAL FILM ANALYSES

The Shaping of Film

Researchers have suggested that films portray the values of society. Tillman and Trier (2007) explained that the media such as television and films as texts "have great potential to teach the public about a wide range of educational issues" (p. 121). Film and other forms of media have contributed to biracial individuals being categorized as "other" (Hall, 2002). According to Giroux (2011), "[F]ilm carries a kind of pedagogical weight that other mediums lack" (p. 686).

Giroux (2011) explained that "as a teaching form, film often puts into play issues that enter the realm of public discourse, debate and policy making in diverse and sometimes dramatic ways – whether we are talking about films that deal with racism, challenge homophobia, or provide provocative representations that address the themes of war, violence, masculinity, sexism and poverty" (p. 690). Giroux also stated, "Films offer subject positions, mobilize desires, and influence us unconsciously, thereby allowing the construction of our cultural landscape." This author added, "Put simply, films both entertain and educate" (Giroux, 2011, p. 687). In the next section of this chapter, I will review some of the literature from researchers who have use films as a form of teaching in multiple disciplines.

Film as Pedagogical Texts

Film provides a valuable media form that can positively contribute to the teaching concepts of diversity (Lee, Drane, & Kane, 2009, p. 97). Additionally, film offers multiple format advantages as a medium with which to prepare and empower educators seeking to

enhance multicultural proficiencies. Lee et al. (2009) shared that "film provides a valuable media form than can positively contribute to the teaching concepts of diversity" (p. 97). Researchers have supported the use of film for educational purposes. While Champoux (1999) noted that multiple researchers utilized film as an effective medium for teaching, the author credited Wegner as the pioneer of using film as a teaching medium. Aitken and Zonn (1994) observed that "geographers have been using film as a pedagogic device for some time" (p. 291). Lim, Diamond, Chang, Primm, and Lu (2008) noted that "feature films have been used for teaching psychiatry for many years" (p. 291). Lee et al. (2009) further stated that film implementation aids in facilitating student learning, knowledge retention, and provides students with opportunities to reflect upon relevant issues. Hence, educators with limited exposure to diverse instructional environments can readily utilize film depictions to relate to a given concept even in absence of actual experience. For example, they acknowledge that film provides people with opportunities to relate to experiences and concepts without the need for actually having experienced them. Film also offers a powerful vicarious sense of reality, thereby enabling educators to efficiently integrate the application of concepts into their repertoire and teaching experiences.

Champoux (1999) affirmed theorist Siegfried Kracauer's idea that film has the ability to "make one see and grasp things which only cinema is privileged to communicate" (p. 207). In the tide of competing perspectives surrounding the appropriateness and value of addressing race issues within the transparent and public forum of schools, film offers advantages. Accordingly, film lends itself to a compelling visual metaphor with the potential to introduce views not explicit in subject matter, but instead are rich in interpretative content that remains highly subjective and relative to the individual's unique perspective and background. This form of media often reveals the rich diversity offered by participants that it seeks to enhance through

exposure to perspective and a wide range of situational context. While Champoux offered empirical information regarding the expected effects of using film to discuss theories or concepts before or after a discussion, in this regard, film media lends itself to pre and post-test evaluations, and thus subject to monitoring and increased efficacy. Champoux offered research outlining five major results of empirical assessments of the effects of using film for teaching and training. The examples are that: (a) student course evaluations were typically positive regarding the use of films, (b) videotapes in training programs had positive effects in reducing anxiety and learning social skills, (c) a video-based mental illness educational program had positive effects for high school students, (d) viewing and discussing edited versions of a specific television show's episodes had statistically significant positive effects on learning for young children, and (e) a meta-analysis of studies of visual media effects on attitude formation and change in nursing education found large effects on attitude change and moderate effects on attitude retention.

Film also offers an opportunity to ground academic concepts into relatable scenarios for educators. Preservice educators' limited experience may hamper their ability to confront open-ended questions relating to teaching, whereas film provides a common experience to unify a group and facilitate discussion and participation. Additionally, Lee et al. (2009) shared that "educators may find that film implementation aids in facilitating student learning and knowledge retention" (p. 97).

While authors such as Champoux (1999) have cited both advantages and disadvantages of using film as cited in published literature, the use of technology in teaching has no doubt placed new demands on all educators. Some of the advantages cited are that films are a comfortable medium to contemporary students to keep their interest, they have high production quality and are likely to engage students, they are economical, they offer powerful experiences

beyond the classroom, students can hone their analytical skills using film scenes that may differ

from their local environment, and they offer cognitive and affective experiences. The use of film

can also assist school administrators seeking ways to diversify professional development in order

to integrate and model best instructional practices. Media can be inexpensive, easily accessible,

and available in emerging formats such as blogs, websites, and mobile phone apps. Further,

formal evaluation instruments, educator applications, and certification parameters, all place an

increased emphasis on educator's ability to utilize technology within the scope of best practices.

It is worth noting, however, that some disadvantages cited are copyright restrictions, foreign

films that may require students to read subtitles, films are fiction, student reactions can vary

depending on actors and actresses, content can distract students from theories, and using films

can take time away from other class activities.

While the use of film as an instructional format has endured for decades, several

researchers have specifically documented its use in education. In 1999, Champoux addressed the

benefits of using film as a teaching resource for organizational behavior, management theories,

and concepts. More recently, Cooley and Pennock (2015) discussed teaching policy analysis

through the use of animated films. As a medium spanning both decades and fields of study, film

has endured as a viable training tool even prior to present era in which the expanded use of

technology is seen as essential in preparing educators for an increasingly diverse and competitive

global economy.

Biracial Films

In the next section of this chapter, I will provide information about the biracial films used

in this work. For the purpose of this dissertation, the phrase "biracial films" is defined as a film

that involves a character whose race contains members of two racial groups, specifically black

and white. Moreover, the person is identified as black-white biracial in the film, and this fact is made known to the viewer. A biracial film does not always mean that the actual actor/actress race portraying the biracial character is biracial. Historically, biracial characters in films were portrayed in the role of a "tragic mulatto." Bogle (1973) described this trope as a biracial woman who is torn between a "divided racial inheritance" (p. 9). Spickard (1989) stated, "The tragic mulatto is a character torn to the point of derangement between his desire to be White and the certainty that society regarded him as Black" (p. 254). This role of the biracial character originated in the film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

The visual biracial texts that will be analyzed in this dissertation are *Imitation of Life* (1934), *Lost Boundaries* (1949), *Pinky* (1949), *I Passed for White* (1960), *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995), and most recently *Belle* (2014). Other biracial films that I viewed but chose not to include are, *Murder!* (1930), *Show Boat* (1936, 1951), *Imitation of Life* (1959), *The Human Stain* (2003), *Beyond the Lights* (2014), and *Black or White* (2014). My reasons for not including the other biracial films were that (a) in my opinion, the race of the biracial character were not the focus of the film; or that (b) the film was old and not as compelling as others. For example, two old films were *Murder* (1930) and *Show Boat* (1936). Additionally, it was difficult for me to watch the main mammie character because she played the role very well. In my opinion, this was degrading as a black female. Lastly, noteworthy television films dealing with biracial issues include the TV mini-series *Queen* (1993) and the TV movie *A House Divided* (2000). The TV movie *A House Divided* (2000) was excluded because it is not readily available for viewing. In fact it can only be found on a VHS cassette for approximately 50 dollars.

It is important to know that researching biracial films presents challenges much like researching print biracial literature. One of those challenges is related to the lack of consistent

classification of biracial people as I shared in the last chapter. A few modern examples of the names that biracial people are often categorized or identified as are *multiracial*, *interracial*, *mixed, and other*. Additionally, the terms *octoroon*, *quadroon*, *mulatto*, *griffe*, and *sacatra* were once commonly used.

Identifying Biracial Films

In this next section, I will describe my efforts to identify biracial films. My purpose for completing this was to ensure that I had identified every biracial film available with a main biracial character. As a result of the historically complex and complicated identification of biracial individuals, I started the search of biracial films broadly with my preferred term of "biracial" and added terms such as "passing" and "tragic mulatto" to narrow the results. Additionally, I often searched using the terms film and movie. For example, I conducted a search in JSTOR using the terms "biracial" and "film." This search yielded 650 search results. Of those results there were a few articles that were useful with respect to this work (Beltran, 2005; Bernstein & White, 2007; Berrettini, 1999; Bowdre, 2014; McGehee, 2006). Beltran (2005) discussed the rise of "multiracial actors as Hollywood action film protagonists" (p. 50). Although Beltran's work focused heavily on recent films and the casting of actual multiracial actors, she acknowledges the existence of the tragic mulatto character. This author explained that "many of the earliest film images of biracial characters portray them as tragic mulattos" (Beltran, 2005, p. 56). Berrettini (1999) highlighted the concept of passing and tragic mulatto in the film *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995). Two benefits of this research are that it (a) confirmed that there are a dearth of films that fit within the category that I describe as biracial films, and (b) that the film *Imitation of Life* is indeed a classic and was groundbreaking in introducing the concept of passing. Bowdre (2014) identified *Imitation of Life* (1934, 1959), *Lost Boundaries* (1949), and *Pink*y (1949)as

"prominent films" about "the topic of passing" (p. 21). According to Bowdre (2014), director John Stahl's movie *Imitation of Life* (1934) "was the first time [that] a Black actress was selected to play the role as a passing character" (p. 23).

The Web of Science searches that I conducted did not yield any significant research. In fact, several of the searches that I conducted yielded no results. For example, the search "biracial," "film," and "passing," and "biracial," "movie," and "passing," did not return any results. Also, "biracial," and "film," and "biracial," and "movie," did not return any results. Additionally, the search combinations of "tragic," "mulatto," and "film," "tragic," "mulatto," and "movie," "tragic," "mulatta," and "film," and "tragic," "mulatta," and "movie," yielded no results.

In addition the research processes described here, I spent countless hours searching several library databases, websites, and numerous other methods to find films that fit this visual biracial text genre. Based on the multiple searches yielding the same researchers and journal articles, I have likely exhausted the types of biracial films that I have described in this chapter.

Additional resources utilized to identify films were IMDb, Amazon, and Google. The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) is an online database or website first appearing in 1990. The website is a premiere database including motion picture, television, and video game content. Amazon is an American commerce electronic retailer. For the purposes of this project, the company's DVD, Blueray, and video streaming services provided access to films. The final resource utilized to identify films included the online search engine Google. Google has transformed into a major company that in addition to its search engine includes cloud storage, and a growing list of productivity software. Google easily fields over a billion online information searches daily, and without exception has the largest database and supporting server network

throughout the world. The aforementioned websites provide a vast and efficient network for searching films and exploring film history. Additionally, the collective volume of film information shared by these services is complimented through additional access to what can be considered a nearly limitless network chain of additional resources.

It is also important to note that many of the films identified in this chapter were discovered as I was researching a term that was used in the film *Queen* using the Google search engine. This search led to other words and eventually a Wikipedia page with a list of biracial films. Although I am unsure of the exact steps that I completed to eventually arrive on this particular page, there is a similar listing of films when searching "passing (racial identity)" via Wikipedia. After searching IMDB for information related to certain film producers and directors, in addition to other searches using Google during the research process, I discovered that some of the suggested or related films involved a biracial character who may not have a notable role. It appears that in some of the films, the overall focus is on an interracial relationship. It may be worth taking a closer look at these films in the future to evaluate their pedagogical potential. By utilizing these services in conjunction with one another, it is likely that the films that I identified for use in this project provide a significant representation of the collective volume of mostly American films featuring leading biracial characters generated over the last century.

Stuart Hall Encoding/Decoding Theory

Stuart Hall helped pioneer the discussion of the media's role in society, and he is known as one of the leading experts in media studies. Specifically, Hall identifies an area closely related to media studies known as cultural studies. Representation is a main concept of cultural studies. Hall (2002) provided this definition: "Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and

anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way"
(226). Hall states that representation has several meanings, including "to present," "to image," to
"depict," "standing in for," and "taking the place of" (Jhally, 1997). Representation is the way in
which meaning is given to images and words that are depicted in the media via films, television,
or words on a page. Hall contends that those groups who have power control what is represented
in the media.

For the purpose of this analysis the reading of the visual biracial text will focus on the
depiction of the biracial character(s) in the texts. With this notion of groups with power exerting
control over media representations the logical conclusion will entail biracial characters
depictions portrayed as the "tragic mulatto" (Bogle, 1973, p. 9). Hall argued that an image can
have different meanings, and that there is no guarantee that images will work in the way that the
producer intends.

Existing scholarly works involving teacher preparation have applied Stuart Hall's
practice of analysis using encoding and decoding (Adams, 2011; Trier, 2005). In my analysis, I
will decode each text using Hall's Encoding/Decoding theory. This work will focus on the
critical reading of visual biracial texts using CRT as my lens. Hooks (1997) explained that "the
issue is not about freeing ourselves from representations but being enlightened when we watch
representations." The act of being an "enlightened witness" means becoming critically vigilant
about the world that one lives in (Hooks, 1997).

Hall (1980) defined the encoder as the producer and the decoder as the receiver. Hall
further identifies three positions "from which decodings of a televisual discourse may be
constructed." The positions are the dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. The
dominant position is also described as "operating inside the dominant code" whenever the viewer

encodes or interprets the meaning of the televisual discourse in a manner consistent with the creator's intent. The negotiated position also described as the "negotiated code" occurs when the encoder described as the viewer accepts some of the text in a dominant way, but rejects other content in an oppositional manner. The oppositional position or "oppositional code" is the opposite of a dominant position. In this interpretation the encoder rejects the majority of the intended meaning of the text. (p. 136)

In the next section of this chapter, I will provide a brief summary of each film followed by a critical analysis. These analyses and the act of decoding will serve as a guide for creating and implementing the pedagogical project using a "pragmatic approach to developing transformative leaders" (Brown, 2004, p. 77).

Imitation of Life (1934) Summary

The process of analyzing *Imitation of Life*, my beloved childhood film, was so challenging that it has ultimately undergone three distinct iterations. I would not have imagined any reading was possible except for "preferred." My initial struggle commenced as I began to layer the Encoding/Decoding analysis with the CRT tenet racism is normal and was forced to ask questions. Is obvious racism present? Does my preferred reading of the film indicate that I tolerate racism? Can I endorse the film as a whole while aspects of it support racism? These thought processes led to my negotiated reading because, while I enjoy the overall film, I balk at the portrayed racism. Still, I was embattled with a negotiated reading given the film's strong racist character depictions and this process led to more questions. What were the intentions of the writer, director, and producer of the film? Whose agenda is being advanced in this film? Given that I despise the tragic mulatto and mammie characters and the role that they play in the film, an oppositional reading gradually dominated. Yet, I remained conflicted for numerous weeks and

questioned my personal beliefs while one question continued to plague me. Who was this film created for? Why did I like this film so much prior to writing my reading? Ultimately, my oppositional reading persisted. During the remainder of this analysis I will share specific information from the film to support my oppositional analysis.

This film was created primarily to entertain mainstream white Americans, in my judgment. The storyline ends happily for the white characters, yet is tragic for the black and biracial characters. Additionally, the film portrays clear divisions between whites and blacks. As for the question why I liked this film so much prior to my reading, I determined that few sources of mainstream media included black characters; therefore my preference for the film grew out of my appreciation for the presence of a notable black and biracial character.
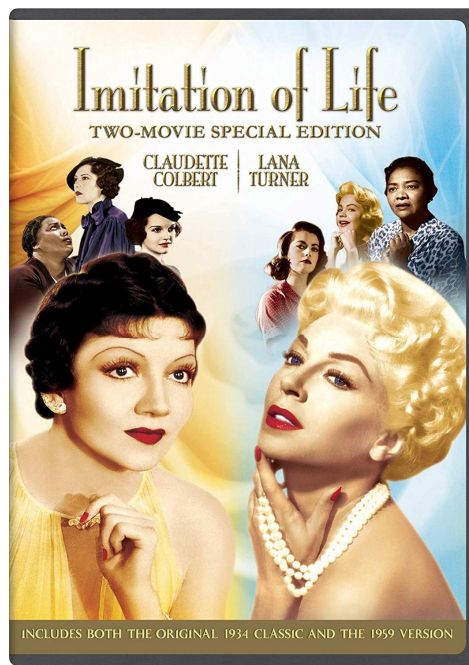
Figure 1. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the two-movie special edition of the film *Imitation of Life* (1934; 1959).

Imitation of Life (1934) Oppositional Reading

Tragic Mulatto

The film's bold racial depictions likely account for its endurance as "a classic." In fact, Peola's strong biracial characterization is often used as a mainstream media reference for the tragic mulatto stereotype. Peola struggles with her biracial identity throughout the entire film. Being identified by society as black (one drop rule), she is unhappy, resorting to her secretive "passing" at an early age. Delilah (Peola's mother) is depicted as a mammie and refers to herself as such. She works for, and lives with, a white woman, Beatrice; Peola opposes Deliah's self referencing as "mammie," preferring instead to address her as mother.

Structurally, Peola shows the first signs of a tragic mulatto character within the first quarter of the film. In the unfolding scene, a very young (6- or 7-year-old) Peola is visibly upset. Delilah and Beatrice talk to her and the viewer is made aware that she is struggling with her racial identity. The following quotations emerge in their dialogue.

> Peola: I'm not black! I'm not black! I won't be black! She called me black. Jessie called me that.
>
> Beatrice: Jessie! Jessie Pullman, shame on you...
>
> Delilah: No, no Ms. Bea don't make her apologize. Ain't no good in that.
>
> Peola: You, it's because you black, you make me black. I won't I won't I won't be black.

Despite her white phenotype, Peola continues to struggle as the film progresses as she is forced to identify as Black. It is evident to the viewer that she loves her mother, yet she remains unhappy witnessing black oppression. For example, her mother's dialect serves to reveal an apparent lack of an education. During a scene at Beatrice's party, Peola become upset and expresses her disapproval with being black to Delilah as the two remain segregated from the party. Delilah notices that Peola is unhappy and offers to dance with her. Peola shared how she

was feeling with Delilah while looking into a mirror. The following are quotations from their

dialogue.

> Peola: I want to be white like I look.

> Peola: Look at me, am I not white?

> Peola: Isn't that a white girl there?

> Delilah: Oh honey we's had this out so many times. Can't you get it out of your head?

> Peola: No I can't. You wouldn't understand that would you? What is there for me anyway?

Delilah loves her daughter, and it is evident that Peola loves her in return, but her own

happiness remains elusive in a racially divided society. Delilah repeatedly attempts to help Peola

find happiness but most notably encourages her to subordinate her white heritage to avoid

challenges. One attempt involves Delilah sending Peola to a notable black Southern college. The

viewer can reasonably conclude that the elite college was one of the best for blacks. The

following are quotations from their dialogue.

> Delilah: Peola won't you be a good child like you can be darling and do something for your mammy.

> Peola: Don't say mammy.

> Delilah: Look here baby, you go down south to one of them high tone colleges. Where only the high tones goes. Would you do that for me honey?

> Peola: A Negro school.

> Delilah: Ain't nothing to be ashamed of daughter dear. Meet your cross halfway, don't be near so heavy. Go mongst your own quit battling. Your little head sore now from butting against stone walls. Open up and say Lord I bows my head. He made you black honey. Don't be telling him his business. Accept it honey, do that for your mammy.

This attempt was unsuccessful; Peola left the college and began working despite the fact

that Delilah is so wealthy that there is not a need for her to enter the labor force. This was

Peola's final attempt to pass before disowning her mother. After Delilah receives a letter that Peola has left the college, she and Beatrice travel to find her. Peola first chooses to place a physical barrier between herself and her mother by moving away; she then disowns her mother through her refusal to communicate. It is evident to the viewer that Peola is not electing to pass in order to simply obtain any privileges associated with securing a job or economic advancement. Peola clearly does not want to be associated with her black heritage or mother. During the scene in which Peola shares her decision with her mother she describes the conflict that she is experiencing with looking white and being identified as black. The following dialogue emerge from the scene.

Peola: I want to go away.

Delilah: Go away. Go where Peola?

Peola: I mean, by that I mean I want to go away and you mustn't see me or ...play me or anything. I mean even if you pass me on the street you will have to pass me by.

Beatrice: Oh no Peola.

Peola: I know it's terrible Ms. Bea but you don't know what it is to look white and be black. You don't know. I can't go on this way any longer.

Delilah: I can't give up my baby. I bore you. I nursed you. I love you. I love you more en you can guess. You can't ask your mammy to do this.

Peola: You've got to promise me mother.

Delilah: I'm your mammy child. I ain't no white mother! It's too much to ask of me. I ain't got the spiritual strength to beat it. I ain't hang on no cross. I ain't got the strength. You can't ask me to unborn my own child.

Peola: I'm sorry mother. I know it's asking a lot but I've got to learn my own life. Bye.

The film concludes with Delilah dying of heartbreak as a result of Peola's decision. The final dark scene is at Delilah's funeral when Peola is overwrought, crying, and begging for her dead mother's forgiveness. The scenes outlined above support the CRT tenet that racism is

normal, in that they represent the tragic mulatto characterization and ultimately subscribe to the manner in which society stereotypically view's biracial individuals. I am in opposition to these scenes and the tragic mulatto stereotype; however, I recognize the significance of these stereotypes in film as they contribute to the evidence of the historical divisions between blacks and whites. In the case of *Imitation of Life,* it is not the struggle within the biracial individual, but the external struggle resulting from society's pressure to assume or embrace the qualities of an inferior race and the accompanying oppression that remains poignant.

Interest Convergence

One significant aspect of the film lends itself to the CRT tenet of interest convergence and further contributes to my opposition of the film. From the beginning of their relationship a viewer of the film can argue that Beatrice benefits from employing Delilah. While deliberate scenes in the film are encoder attempts to convince the viewer of a legitimate friendship, other scenes clearly reinforce the superior status of Beatrice and inferior status of Delilah. Being single, Beatrice needs assistance with her daughter and she struggles financially with her maple syrup business. In an era where single mothers—both black and white—were stigmatized, Delilah's caretaker role provides a cushion of legitimacy. Despite Delilah earning significant financial wealth and independence, she chooses to work for Beatrice as a submissive happy servant in a manner subtly paralleling a sharecropper's replacement of a slave.

Ultimately, Beatrice gains the most from her exploitative relationship with Delilah. Delilah freely gave Beatrice' her pancake recipe that led to the business boom and wealth. During a scene in which Beatrice is explaining to Delilah that she earned a 20% interest in the pancake business, Delilah responds in the stereotypical mammie fashion: "I's your cook and I

want to stay your cook. I gives it to you honey (she's talking about the pancake recipe). I make you a present of it."

After begging her not to make her leave her home, the insinuation is that Delilah remains happiest serving Beatrice. The disparity deepens after Delilah promises Beatrice that she will put the money away for her, and Delilah responds that she can use it for her funeral. The idea that Beatrice would give Delilah only 20 percent of the company, or was empowered to determine what share Delilah was entitled to in the first place supports interest convergence. As a black woman, it is insulting for me to witness a black woman character longing to serve the white woman all of her life. She is depicted as too ignorant to care about money or to possess any ambition such as a desire her own home. Even after financial stability, a she continues to clean for Ms. Bea and massage her feet, all the while remaining in a home where her daughter is segregated from parities and thus fueling her feelings of inadequacy about her race. Her service to a white woman, therefore, takes precedence over attending to the emotional needs of her own child. Overall, *Imitation of Life* supports the perpetuation of racism through the depiction of the tragic mulatto character, the mammie character, and through the exploitation of blacks through the act of interest convergence.

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***Lost Boundaries* (1949) Summary**

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Lost Boundaries (1949) is a story based on true events of a biracial couple, each with a white phenotype that participate in the act of passing. As the film progresses, the viewer discovers that their decision to pass is an effort to maintain their economic and social standing in society. On the back of the DVD case, the narrative describing the film reads:

> Scott Carter is a skilled doctor - and a man without prospects. Rejection letters from hospitals pile up. His wife is pregnant with their first child. Unable to land a job because of his race, Scott (Mel Ferrer) decides: "For one year of my life," he says, "I'm going to be a white man." That one year becomes two, then 10, then 20. But it's still only a matter

of time before Scott's secret is out and he confronts racism in the New Hampshire town he's served for decades.

A light-skinned black family passes for white in this powerful, fact-based tale. Produced by Louis de Rochemont, one of the most acclaimed filmmakers of the late 1940s, Lost Boundaries belongs to a forward-looking cluster of postwar films that declared war on society's ills. Like Boomerang!, Pinky, Gentleman's Agreement and others of the era, it resonates with conviction, proving great issues are the stuff of great filmmaking.

The film begins with Scott Mason Carter graduating from medical school and marrying Marsha Mitchell in the same day. Early in the film, the viewer becomes aware that although both Scott and Marsha appear White, they are biracial. Scott moves Marsha to Georgia when he is approved for his internship at a Black hospital. Upon arriving, he is told that the board recently decided that they must give internships to southern applicants. This is at a time when hospitals were segregated. Scott and Marsha are forced to move in with her parents and Scott has to work as a shoemaker. Scott continues to apply for internships and is denied from multiple hospitals, likely because of his Black heritage. Scott and Marsha are pregnant and Scott decides that for 1 year, he will live as a white man by participating in the act of passing. During this year, Scott takes an emergency request to care for an ill doctor, Dr. Brackett. Scott has to perform an emergency surgery to save the doctor's life. During Dr. Brackett's recovery period, he offers Scott an opportunity to take over his father's practice in Keenham, New Hampshire. Scott shares the truth about his black heritage with Dr. Brackett, who persuades him to go and continue passing and informs him that he can live in his father's home for free. Scott and Marsha agree to the offer and move to Keenham, New Hampshire. While in Keenham they continued to participate in the act of passing along with their two children, Howard and Shelly. Scott also travels back to their hometown to assist at a Black hospital that he and his medical school Jesse founded. It was not until Scott decides to join the military that his truth about being part "Negro"

is shared with the public. After Scott and Marsha's family secret is made public, they continue to live a lifestyle similar to that while passing, without denying their full racial makeup.
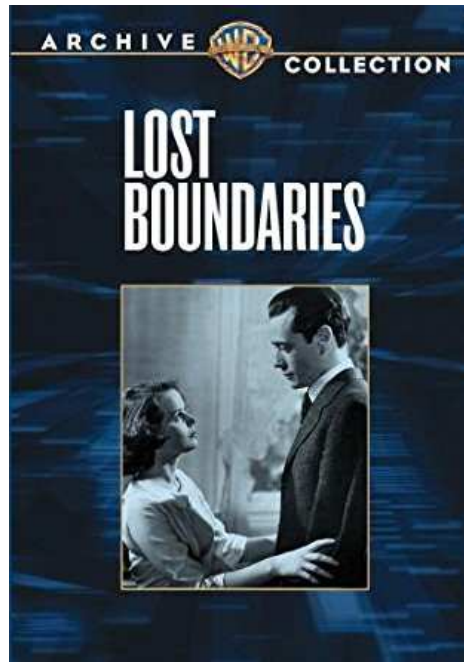
Figure 2. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the film *Lost Boundaries* (1949).
Lost Boundaries (1949) Preferred Reading

Aligned with the succession of films this dissertation, *Lost Boundaries* perpetuates the CRT tenet that racism is normal. There are several scenes that address the complexities of race and the strong societal divisions between blacks and whites and specifically mirror the nuances experienced by those individuals living with a biracial composition in 1940s America. Although I stand in opposition of the racism depicted in the films in this case, the portrayal of race might be among the most realistic of the project's films. In this case, I did not make an assumption about my anticipated reading of the film prior to watching it.

As with other films, my initial impressions of the film evolved, although my overall reading endured. After researching the film, it was hard to overlook the producer's intent,

stemming from the fact that filmmaker Louis de Rochemont can be credited for taking a stand against racism during the actual production of the film. The host hotel for the cast had reportedly opposed accommodating the black cast members. Rochemont responding by threatening to take his business elsewhere, and as a result, economics prevailed over race—a notable act from the late 1940s.

As I outlined in the introduction of this analysis section, it is important to mention that my preferred reading should not be misconstrued to suggest that I condone any of the racist comments or acts in displayed throughout the film. I adopted a preferred reading based upon four primary factors. First, *Lost Boundarie*s accurately depicted the black and biracial way of life. Secondly, because the film is based on a true story, in contrast to other films, there was minimal evidence of a tragic mulatto. Thirdly, I appreciated the encoder depicting biracial characters with white phenotypes that were proud of their black heritage. Finally, the film's excellent juxtaposing of institutional stances toward black and biracial people contributed to a preferred reading.

Tragic Mulatto

Of notable absence in this film is an egregiously dominant tragic mulatto character. It is worth noting, however, that I was intrigued by the fact that this film involved a biracial male as the main character in contrast to the more typical stereotyped biracial female character. To a lesser degree, the tragic mulatto character does manifest itself in this film, but is a departure from the stereotype in two distinctive ways. The tragic mulatto character is male, Dr. Carter's son Howard, and the tragic mulatto qualities fail to surface until the end of the film when the family's black heritage is finally exposed publically.

Howard is in college and is set to join the military prior to finding out that he is biracial. Thus, Howard's revelation that he is biracial unfolds, while it is no surprise for the film spectator. The viewer is therefore empowered to surmise how his college friendships with black classmates stem from an implied racial kinship when the character himself remains blind to this reality. Howard's revelation of race is unanticipated, and he is caught off guard, and is suddenly thrust into a world of prejudice, all of which he is completely unprepared for. As a result of this revelation, Howard leaves home and travels to black communities where he is unprepared if not altogether inept in navigating the social surroundings. Howard is arrested after attempting to break up a fight between two black men. He eventually comes to terms with his racial identity and returns home to his family. Having been first rejected by the military (institution) that he was eager to serve, followed by the black community, Howard is faced with limited options. Due to his race, Howard appears to no longer fit in anywhere.

Dr. Carter, the film's main character, is most notable for his absence of tragic mulatto qualities and in fact probably pioneered the earliest film dialogue opposition to the prevailing stereotypes. When asked his opinion of passing early in the film by a black colleague, Dr. Carter assertively expresses opposition. During the respective discussion one of the film character's asked, "Getting back to what you were saying Jesse, I'd like to ask Scott why he objects to passing?" Dr. Carter answers, "If a Negro wants to help his race, he should have the courage to stand up and say I'm a Negro."

> With the baby on the way I have made up my mind for one year of my life I am going to be a white man. [Dr. Carter's dialogue with wife Marsha while completing his internship]

Having been denied employment for 1 year from black and white hospitals, the film's main character chooses to pass. The black hospital was unwilling to hire a man with a white phenotype, and the white hospitals did not want to hire a black (as described by the one drop

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rule) doctor. Dr. Scott was inundated with hospital rejection letters until he is forced to accept an internship position in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he was forced to impersonate a white man. While an intern, Dr. Carter saves the life of Dr. Walter Brackett, who in turn offers him a position taking over his father's practice with the caveat of living free in his father's home. Dr. Carter reveals his race with Dr. Brackett who encourages him to continue passing. Scott agrees and moves Marsha and their newborn son to Keenham, New Hampshire. While Dr. Carter and his family benefit from the opportunity, Dr. Brackett served his own interests in acquiring a skilled doctor to preserve his father's legacy. Throughout the film Keenham community members repeatedly reap the benefits from Dr. Carter's medical expertise and dedication.

Interest Convergence

After Dr. Carter enlists in the U.S. Navy during WWII, intelligence officers discover that he pledged the Black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi. The U.S. Navy eventually changes its policy allowing Negroes to serve as commissioned officers. This institutional change emerges as the epitome of interest convergence. The military understood that qualified individuals were an indispensable need for the war effort, and victory transcended race. This decision sent a strong message of tolerance to whites, and potentially hope for Black and biracial 1949 movie goers.

The film's final scenes depicted a disruption of the status quo as the Carter family continued their life despite their black heritage. Having gained the respect and trust of the community throughout the film, the local pastor responded to the U.S. Navy's revealing of Dr. Carter's race by defending both he and his family. The pastor's actions of encouraging tolerance within the community not only served as a moral foundation for equality, but also juxtaposed an institution of higher calling against an institution of war highlighting the role of segregation in both communities. With the support of the local church behind them, the film's biracial

characters were freed from denial and unashamed of their partial black makeup. The interest convergence CRT tenet played a major role in my development of a preferred reading of *Lost Boundaries*.

Pinky (1949) Summary

Pinky is a story of a lady who is biracial with a white phenotype. Her grandmother Dicey Johnson sends her north at a young age to become a nurse. Ms. Johnson works laundering and ironing for multiple white people in the community. Ms. Johnson also works for Ms. Em, a white lady who lives in a large plantation style home several yards from Ms. Johnson's shack. Pinky is not very fond of Ms. Em and remembers her discriminating against her at a young age. The film begins with Pinky returning home to Dicey Johnson's shack. As the day progresses, Pinky becomes involved in several racially contentious incidents. One involved some white men attempting to rape her after finding out about her black heritage. Later that evening, it is obvious that Pinky is having a difficult time. While away, she fell in love with a white doctor who was not aware that she was biracial.

Ms. Johnson forces Pinky to admit to her and ask forgiveness from God for passing while she was away. Pinky shares that she is going to leave and go back north. Pinky then receives a visit from her fiancée and he begs her to go away with him and continue passing. Pinky struggles with denying who she truly is and asks her fiancée to give her some additional time to visit with her grandmother. Prior to Pinky having an opportunity to leave, Ms. Em becomes sick unto death and the only thing to keep her alive would be a skilled nurse; however, Ms. Em could not afford one, so although Pinky is reluctant, Ms. Johnson forces her to care for Ms. Em. While receiving Pinky's care, Ms. Em challenges her about denying her true identity and is very bossy as it relates to her care. During this time Ms. Em writes her will and dies shortly after. Ms. Em left

her home to Pinky and stated in her will that she knew that she would do something good with it.

Pinky has to go to court as Ms. Em's next of kin sued her and did not feel as though she was

rightfully willed the home. Pinky wins the court case, breaks off the engagement with her

fiancée, and makes Ms. Em's home a school.
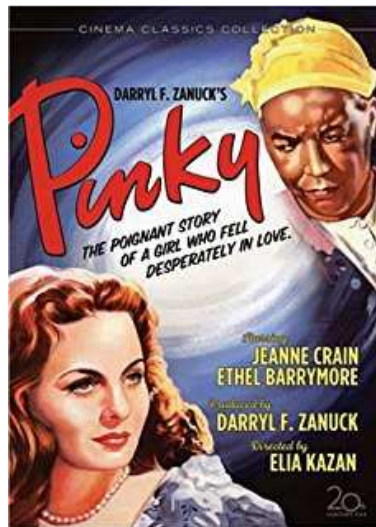
Figure 3. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the film *Pinky* (1949).
Pinky (1949) Negotiated Reading

My initial reaction to the DVD cover of the film *Pinky* (1949) led me to believe that my

reading would be oppositional. The DVD cover displays a picture of Patricia "Pinky" Johnson a

pearl clad, White phenotype woman positioned in the bottom left corner. Scowling down from

the top right corner is a black phenotype woman wearing a mammie scarf/wrap—Pinky's

grandmother Dicey Johnson. The back of the DVD cover reads:

> This deeply moving drama features three indelible Oscar-nominated performances from
> Jeanne Crain, Ethel Barrymore and Ethel Waters. Pinky, a young nurse (Jeanne Crain),
> returns to her small southern hometown, but the trip is a bittersweet one: Educated in the
> North, Pinky is engaged to a doctor who doesn't know that she is part black. Her
> grandmother (Ethel Waters) is a proud black woman who is less than happy to learn that
> Pinky's fiance is white. Then, Pinky's friendship with a southern aristocrat, Miss Em
> (Ethel Barrymore), is cause for more scandal-and a lawsuit-when she dies and leaves her
> house to Pinky. Shunned by both blacks and whites, Pinky's choices make her the
> unfortunate target of bigotry in this compelling classic.

My opposition originates from the filmmaker's/encoders' perpetuation of racism throughout the film. Numerous scenes in the film supported the CRT tenet that racism is endemic through its portrayal of Pinky as the tragic mulatto. Compared to Peola in the film *Imitation of Life*, Pinky's presentation remained more subtle. My reading is oppositional for each of these film aspects, the main character's portrayal of the tragic mulatto stereotype, and the numerous and frequent scenes involving overt racist activity.

Pinky, however, is far from one dimensional; she offers a vibrant complexity of race that propels the viewer deeper into her character. For example, Pinky's departure for nursing school "up North" serves as a metaphor for her own desire to flee from her black heritage. Having initially boarded the train as a colored passenger, at the first stop she is ushered away to the white car by the conductor, and she correspondingly fails to seize the opportunity to identify herself as black. As the movie progresses, having returned home, Pinky shares that she is biracial in two specific scenes where the racial revelation compromises her safety. The first scene involved her being confronted by police before finally culminating with her being taken to jail. In the second scene she was being harassed by two white men. Having discovered that she is biracial, they begin to call racial epitaphs and pursue her in order to rape her. Pinky's character is therefore far from stagnant as she evolves throughout this film. In instances, the same film scenes which work toward reinforcing racist activity, also serve to illustrate that Pinky is confronting her own racial demons both internally and externally.

The compromising of my oppositional reading comes in part from the evolution of Pinky's character and the unfolding interest convergence near the film's conclusion. The late Ms. Em ends up bequeathing her once extravagant plantation home to Pinky, which she can rightfully claim only after persevering through a circus style court proceeding. Ms. Pinky nurses the

dilapidated grounds back into health as a thriving nursing school for black students. Only after this final scene does it become evident to the viewer that that any glory associated with Ms. Em's plantation home and estate is and always was dependent on the presence of black labor. Pinky's evolving character coupled with the positive but subtle message of interest convergence gave birth to my negotiated reading.

Tragic Mulatto

Any subtlety in Pinky's tragic mulatto character portrayal is compensated for by scenes reinforcing the social separation of blacks and whites and the enduring persistence of scenes bolstering the one drop rule. At the film's onset, when Pinky returns home to her grandmother, she does not recognize her granddaughter Pinky and refers to her as "ma'am" despite being much older. Dicey's dialogue describes her dwelling as a "shack" which obviously rests on the fringe of Miss Em's plantation estate. The viewer is provided enough clues to conclude that Dicey (and family) were former slaves off Miss Em. Pinky referenced Miss Em's house as "slave built and slave run," noting that it had lost its appeal once slaves were no longer caring for it. Both Ms. Dicey and Pinky remain clouded in the shadow of slavery because their literal and metaphorical distance to plantation life remains inescapable.

The film portrays Dicey as a mammie that finds happiness in domestic duties as she launders and irons Miss Em's laundry without payment. Dicey checks on Miss Em each morning and considers her a friend. Dicey informs Pinky that Miss Em no longer has money, and possesses only family antiques and heirlooms. Dicey and Ms.Em are seemingly gripped by the same deplorable financial situation with Dicey potentially having the advantage of continuing to work. At one point, Dicey reminds Pinky that Ms. Em cared for her when she had suffered from pneumonia. Racial differences, however, continue to put Miss Em at an advantage as her needs

are attended to regardless of her ability to pay. As the movie progresses Miss Em becomes very

ill requiring a private nurse so Dicey insists that Pinky must do it even threatening to "rip the

living daylights" out of Pinky if she refused. Dicey, therefore forces her granddaughter into a life

of indebted servitude perpetuating the stereotype that Blacks enjoy being subservient and loyal to

White owners or employers.

Pinky's departure north for nursing school coincides with her abandonment of her black

heritage. Having returned home, Dicey continues to pressure Pinky to acknowledge her black

heritage, even suggesting that her refusal to openly admit to it amounted to a sin.

> Dicey: You think I don't know. You think a poor old ignorant woman like me livin in a shack like this don't know nothin, but you're wrong, Pinky, I do know. And I know what you done. And you know I never told you to pretend you is what you ain't.
>
> Pinky: I didn't mean to, Granny, it just happened.
>
> Dicey: But that's a sin before God, and you know it.

As the film commences, Pinky's character struggles with accepting her own black

heritage, as well as the consequences from either sufficiently embracing or not embracing it.

Resonating throughout her journey is the fact that Pinky has little or no chance for happiness

unless she is willing to allocate a disproportionate amount of her identity toward her black

heritage. Hence, Pinky's character fulfils the one drop rule, in that her having to pretend to be

white comes at the price of unhappiness and a lack of personal fulfillment.

Interest Convergence

Most of the film involves the type of aforementioned racist acts and portrayals of Black

characters. Contrary to my opposition to the parts of the film that support the CRT tenet racism is

permanent, I have a preferred reading of the movie ending. In my opinion, the movie ending

supports the CRT tenet of interest convergence, but with seemingly genuine actions from both

parties. The ending of the film is powerful in several ways and the reason for my negotiated

reading. The parts of the film that I have a preferred reading about involve the disruption of the status quo for this period.

Pinky's decision to remain home and avoid the act of passing by letting go of her fiance is a powerful decision revealing Pinky's love for her grandmother and her acceptance of her Black identity. Despite the hatred, discrimination, and oppressive acts Pinky chooses to accept her biracial identity. Miss Em's faith in Pinky's use of her plantation home is equally significant. Pinky turns the home into a specialty black nursing school. Although one could argue that Miss Em gained a legacy that she would not have had without Pinky, her benevolence highlights the benefit of tolerance and collaboration between blacks and whites.

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I Passed for White (1960) **Summary**

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The film *I Passed for White* (1960), produced by Fred M. Wilcox, is the story of a biracial female that decides to move away from her family to participate in the act of passing. The main character is actress Sonya Wilde and her name in the film is Bernice Lee at the beginning, which changes to Lila Brownell after she moves and begins the act of passing. The back of the DVD cover reads:

> A beautiful young woman meets and marries the man of her dreams--only she hasn't told him that she is half-black, and he and his rich family and friends are white. She soon discovers that happiness cannot be founded on a lie.

Bernice Lee is not ashamed of her black heritage, but she becomes frustrated because she has a white phenotype. Her white phenotype is the source of many negative experiences as she goes about her daily activities in a society that is divided by race. The film begins with a scene in which Bernice is mistaken for a white woman when she is approached by a white man in a nightclub. Bernice's brother—a biracial male with an obvious black phenotype—intervenes and causes a fight between him and the white man. After this scene, Bernice shares a similar experience with her grandmother that occurred earlier that day. In this incident, Bernice is at

school and a white female friend found out that she was black and did not want to be friends with her any longer. Bernice shares her frustration with her phenotype with her grandmother. Bernice's desire is to look black because she feels this will make her life simpler. The next day involves a scene in which Bernice is offered a job, but when the female employer finds out that she is part black, she revokes the offer. She explains that it is against company policy to hire a black person. This incident forces Bernice to move away from her family in order to participate in the act of passing.

The lies and deceit begin while Bernice is in route on the airplane. It is at this time that she met her future husband, Frederick "Rick" Leyton, and changed her name to Lila Brownell. When she reports to an office the next day to apply for a job she leads the employer and interviewer to believe that she is white. Lila is given the job and later meets up with Rick again. The two begin dating, and despite Lila's reluctance, Rick convinces her to marry him. At this point in the film, Lila is forced to lie to Rick and his parents. The lies continue for years until Lila and Rick lose their newborn baby shortly after birth. It was at this time that Lila made comments asking the nurse why the baby appeared white. Rick overheard these comments and confronted her later about them. Rick becomes very angry with Lila; he knows she is hiding something because he also found her book about interracial marriages while she was in the hospital. Rick does not accuse Lila of being part black. He believes that Lila had an affair with a black man and that was the purpose of her questions to the nurse. The film ends with Lila leaving Rick and returning to her grandmother and family.
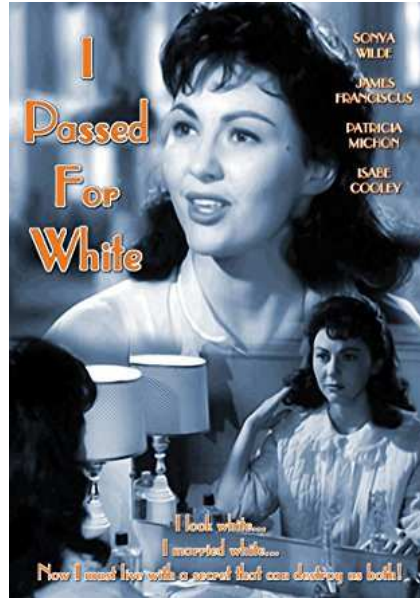
Figure 4. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the film *I Passed for White* (1960).

I Passed for White (1960) Oppositional Reading

In contrast to other films in this project, I maintained a steady trajectory toward an oppositional reading of this film. As the title depicts, the film is primarily about race—specifically, black and white race relations. From beginning to ending, when interpreting the storyline, the viewer is forced to consider race first. It is my opinion that the encoder of the film intended to highlight the obvious divisions between blacks and whites and thus created the stereotypical epitome of the conflicted tragic mulatto. The characterization of Bernice, the biracial character, as the tragic mulatto is apparent throughout the film and evident even in the character's name change to Lila. In this analysis, I will share the details of some of the specific scenes that lead to my oppositional reading of the film as they support the CRT tenet that racism is normal.

Tragic Mulatto

As described in the summary of this film, Bernice experiences overtly racist acts from the onset of the film. The first experience occurs as Bernice is attending an event that at what

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appears to be a night club, the "Green Cat," an integrated establishment where black and white patrons experience a segregated seating arrangement. After Bernice's black date has left their table, a white man sits down in the formerly occupied seat and begins engaging her in a conversation. When Bernice's date returns to the table and confronts the white man, he replies by saying, "Are you colorblind? This girl's white!" A fight then commences between the men.

Bernice follows up this encounter in a conversation with her brother whose phenotype is more traditionally consistent with a person of color. During this conversation Bernice shared that she had experienced a similar situation in school earlier that day. Bernice states, "I guess I have to wear a sign around my neck saying I am Negro," solidifying her characterization as the tragic mulatto. The next scene further supports the tragic mulatto claim occurring later that evening in Bernice's bedroom. Her grandmother comes in and asks her how she doing. The next set of quotations involve a conversation with Bernice and her grandmother about the experience that occurred that day at school.

> Bernice: I've never had such a terrible day in my life…I made friends with a nice white girl.
>
> Gran: When she found out you were colored she wasn't so nice.
>
> Bernice: Now all of the girls snub me, including the Negro girls…Gran I can't go back to that school ever…It happens every place I go grand, because I'm different.

As the conversation continues the viewer is privileged to a small amount of background information about Bernice's family history. The next set of quotations describe this limited information.

> Gran: Those are...people and there are lots of them white ones and colored ones but there are lots of real good people who don't care what your race or color is, people like the Carrs back in Virginia. Ahhhh When I worked for Mrs. Carr I was with real ladies and gentleman. I would like to see you with people like that.
>
> Bernice: I'd love to know people like Mrs. Carr, people who don't look down on you if you are Negro, but how am I going to know people like that gran…I'm nothing.

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Gran: Don't say that, you're as good as anybody anywhere and you can be proud of your family just like I am.

Bernice: Oh gran I am proud of my family, but I'm different. I'm not really a Negro and I'm not a white. But why can't I be what I look to be what people take me for.

It is also important to note that this is one of the very few positive parts of the film as it relates to race relations between blacks and whites. Specifically, the part in the next quotation that references "real good people who don't care what your race or color is" and Bernice sharing "Oh gran, I am proud of my family." The conversation continues and the topic of passing is discussed.

Gran: So you're thinking about passing for white?

Bernice: How can I help but think about it? I am white.

Gran: Yes, I did, but if I had it all to do over again knowing what I know now I wouldn't do it.

Bernice: Why Gran? Children, having children of mixed blood like you, especially like you, there's where the real trouble is. I understand Gran, but I am not going to get married. I thought about it a lot and I don't want to get married.

Gran: That's what you think now.

Bernice: Well why couldn't I get a job as a white girl just at work?

Gran: How could you be white at work and colored at home? You'd start making white friends and telling lies, besides your mother wouldn't stand for it. She's strong against passing and worries about you all of the time.

Bernice: But there are some who pass.

Gran: They're living behind lies.

Bernice: I wish I could be a real Negro or a real white person, somebody, I don't know what to do.

In this scene, the viewer can gather that Bernice's grandmother is against passing and has opposition to race mixing. It can be assumed that Bernice's grandmother was married to, or in some sort of a romantic relationship with, a white man, but she has regrets as a result of the

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negative experiences associated with looking white and being biracial. As this scene ends, it is apparent that Bernice is preoccupied with passing.

The film progresses and Bernice continues to encounter racism after identifying as black according to the one drop rule. For example, Bernice is given a clerical job as a typist in the final scene prior to her leaving town to begin the act of passing. The female employer comes out of an office and states, "Well my dear you did very well on your typing and aptitude test." Immediately after this statement, however, Bernice gives the female employer her application and she rescinds the offer. The female employer states, "I'm terribly sorry Ms. Lee, I didn't know you were Negro. The store has a policy, it's not personal but…" The female employer then offers Bernice a job as an elevator girl. After Bernice declines and is leaving, the female employer shares disappointedly with her, "Too bad, if you hadn't put it down you would have gotten the job. I would've liked you to have had it." My opposition of Bernice's tragic mulatto character continues because the viewer is lead to believe that she is only passing for the purpose of getting a job. The blatant denial of a job due to race and the character's attempts to "manipulate" her race to seek are job blatantly portray the racist societal views and treatment of blacks as inferior.

Interest Convergence

Of all the films included in this project, the encoder for *I Passed For White* was so adamant about perpetuating racism that there were no scenes that justified the CRT tenet interest convergence. The message of passing is bad and is reinforced on two fronts: first, through the unhappiness of the biracial character, and secondly through the acts of folly that accompany the character's attempts to pass potentially culminating in the dark implication that black white interracial couples are doomed to face stillborn children. The majority of the movie drives both

the character and audience toward the conclusion that being black is so horrific it is better to run away from it than to admit to it.

The next set of quotations will serve as an example of the division between blacks and whites. In this scene Lila has avoided Rick for several days after he asked her to marry him. Rick confronts Lila about her actions. At this time Lila shares with him that there are things that he doesn't know about her. One of the things that Lila mentioned to Rick is that he did not know who her family was.

Rick: The only important thing now is that you love me.

Lila: That's the only important thing.

Rick: Yes, Lila, that's the important thing.

Lila: More important than anything, other people, what I am, your family, everything?

Rick: Yes, Lila, everything.

During this scene, the filmmaker solidifies the fact that nothing is more important than the racial divide between blacks and whites. There are two reasons that support my conclusion. The first is that blacks and whites are so divided that Rick does not think that he has to consider race in his comment of "everything." The viewers later discover that race is more important than love because Rick engages in multiple racist acts throughout the remainder of the film.

Lastly, I take opposition with the films ending in that the biracial individual has to chose one race and therefore deny half of themselves. Bernice leaves and goes back to her grandmother and brother. They enthusiastically greet her to welcome her back home. It is my opinion that the encoder wanted to portray the message that the biracial individuals should claim to be black if they want to be happy. The entire time that Bernice was passing as Lila, she was unhappy and experienced a tragic loss. The encoder does not provide any justification for the death of her

baby. It is my belief that this is a covert display of racism and an effort to discourage race mixing. In fact, like many other biracial films, the writer does not give the viewer much background information about Bernice's parents or how she acquired her white phenotype.

<p align="center">***Devil in a Blue Dress*** **(1995) Summary**</p>

In the film *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995), Denzel Washington plays Easy Rawlins, a war veteran who loses his job as a result of a racist boss. He is introduced to a man, Albright, who has been hired by a man named Todd who is running for mayor. Albright shares with Easy that Todd has hired him to find his ex-girlfriend Daphne. Albright hires Easy to look for Daphne, and shares with him that his purpose for hiring him is because she likes to associate with blacks. Daphne is a biracial woman passing as white. The viewer later finds out that Albright was actually hired by Todd's opponent running for position of mayor, Terrell.

Several people in the film become involved in the search for Daphne and people affiliated with her are being murdered. After the police start accusing Easy of the murders, he decides to go directly to Todd for answers. Easy finds out that Todd did not hire Albright. Todd offers to pay Easy to find Daphne and protect her. Easy solicits the help of a friend to get to the bottom of the mystery behind Daphne and the murders. In the process he finds out that Terrell found out Daphne's secret (her partial Black identity) and forced Todd to drop out of the race for mayor or her would tell the public. Todd's family then paid Daphne a significant amount of money to leave town.

In an effort to save her relationship with Todd, Daphne hires someone to secure naked pictures of Terrell with children. Terrell is a pedophile and she wants to use the pictures to get Todd back in the race for mayor, and so that he can marry her. Daphne is almost murdered in the process, but Easy saves her and secures the pictures. In the end Todd still rejects Daphne, grants

Easy protection from the police, and takes the pictures to secure his position in the mayoral race again. The film ends with Easy dropping Daphne off at her home that she shares with her brother. Easy tries to visit Daphne a few weeks later and discovers that she and her brother had left town.
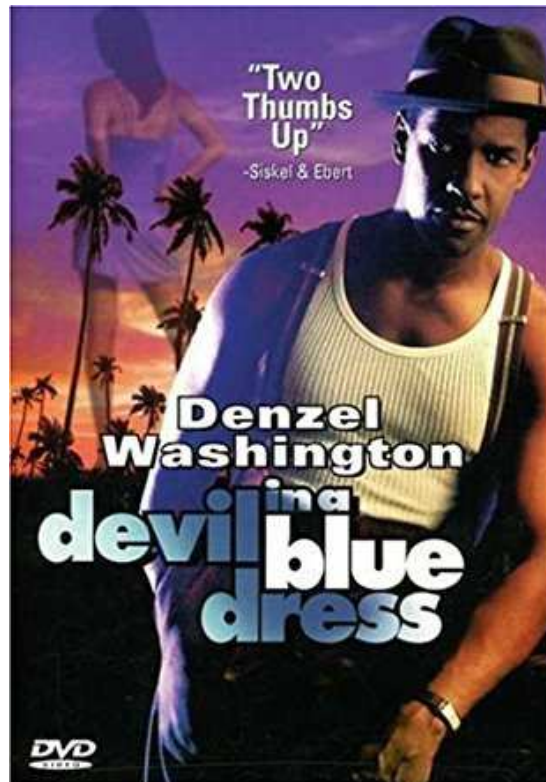
Figure 5. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the film *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995).
Devil in a Blue Dress (1995) Negotiated Reading

Devil in a Blue Dress (1995) is among the more contemporary biracial films that I viewed for this dissertation. My first impression of the film based on the DVD cover was that I would have a negotiated reading. It is important to note that I have since discovered that there are a few different DVD covers. The cover I am referencing features Denzel Washington ("Easy") with a drawn gun. Below, Daphne is wearing the same blue dress that adorns her throughout the entire film. Easy's picture is approximately ten times larger than Daphne's. My initial viewing

was nearly complete before I realized the film's title was describing the biracial character, Daphne Monet. The negative connotations surrounding the word "devil" are obviously attributed to the film's biracial character, Daphne.

In contrast to the other films, this film's most transparent storyline was not explicitly centered around race. Despite race's subordinate role in this film the CRT tenet that racism is normal thrives in the summer of 1948 setting. The film is lacking an egregious depiction of the tragic mulatto character but reasonable viewer inferences surrounding Daphne's character are sufficient for extracting tragic mulatto characteristics. Not until chapter eight do answers to the mystery begin to surface, and it is not until this point the film reveals Daphne's Creole mother and white father. Throughout most of the film therefore, Daphne's character has been passing and is referred to as a white woman. In this respect, the unfolding mystery of Daphne's race shares a balanced weight with the overall mystery housed within the film. The clues revealed about Daphne's race unfold in tandem with the film's mystery. The revelation of race unfolds slowly during a gradual unraveling in which the greatest mystery of the film, the importance of race, becomes increasingly clear, despite the subtleness of the revelation. In the end, the critical viewer will release this film was all about race, even when it was not. In order to justify my negotiated reading, I will share some of the scenes that support the existence of racism as a way of life in the film. Although I am in opposition with the perpetuation of these racist comments and acts, the overall message from the film is strong enough to warrant a negotiated reading.

Tragic Mulatto

By the film's conclusion, Daphne loses her fiance and fails to accept the glaring reality that it is because of her race. Daphne moves from the city where she lives, choosing exile over her social realm. Daphne spends the money that she was given by her fiance's parents for his

benefit, and pays the price financially. Daphne spends her life attempting to pass, and in the end, has absolutely nothing to show for it. Daphne's character would not be able to articulate that she is tragic mulatto, namely due to the fact such realities are lost on her. In the end, however, her race and her denial of her black identity will end up costing her everything. It is precisely Daphne's inability to make a connection between her race and the price she pays for being black, that binds her to the tragic mulatto. She struggles deeply on account of her race, she is simply incapable of seeing it, just as she cannot seem to see any black within her skin.

During the entire film, the viewer is forced to try and find Daphne and determine how she is connected with two murders. Daphne's boyfriend Todd was running for mayor and had to drop out of the race once his opponent informed him that she was passing. Without the viewer knowing how, Daphne finds out that there are pictures of the opponent with naked children. She then offers $7,000.00 for the pictures in order to get her boyfriend back into the mayoral race and to keep her race a secret so that they can be married. Easy finds the pictures and takes them along with Daphne to Todd. On the drive to see Todd, Daphne shares information with Easy and the issue of race is discussed. During this entire scene, Daphne is sitting in the passenger seat of Easy's car applying makeup. The next set of quotations outlines the exchange between Daphne and Easy.

> Daphne: What upset them the most is that I didn't tell them and then Terrell threatened to go public about my mother. That just added insult to injury. When Todd sees the pictures there will be nothing to stand in the way of us getting married.
>
> Easy: Are you sure about that?
>
> Daphne: Of course Terrell doesn't want to go to jail.

I lost respect for Daphne at this point in the film because it is clear that she is only interested in the pictures for the purpose of continuing to pass and to marry Todd. She does not mention taking the pictures to the police so that Terrell can be punished for being a pedophile,

breaking the law, and hurting innocent children. The conversation between Daphne and Easy continues and it is apparent to the viewer that Daphne does not understand that her partial Black identity, not the mayoral race, is primary issue between her and Todd.

Easy: I'm not talking about Terrell.

Daphne: Todd and I are very much in love and in the end his family just wants him to be happy.

Daphne's ignorance takes center stage; while everyone else around her can make the connection between her race and her quickly eroding world, including the viewer, she cannot. The film's director has made one connection very clear for the viewer—namely, that being a pedophile is enough to destroy a mayoral campaign, but equally destructive for a mayoral candidate is having a spouse with one black parent. On the scale of detriment, Daphne being biracial is as destructive as a child rapist. Daphne, however, pursues a futile resolution because she is unable to grasp the implication of her own race.

As mentioned earlier, I was disappointed that Daphne was immoral in her motive and handling of the pictures displaying a pedophile with children. This part of the film may be credited for the origination of the title *Devil in a Blue Dress*. Daphne went through great lengths to get the pictures, which also led to her spending several thousand dollars and cost others their lives; however, she only wanted them for her personal motives, and never made mention of justice for the victims of the pedophile.

Lastly, the ending of the film was realistic in that race was more important than anything else and thus the true mystery of the film comes to light. Although Todd claimed that he loved Daphne, it was not enough to cross the color line. Denzel Washington's character "Easy" narrates this point best near the end of the film as Daphne and Todd are having their final conversation about their future.

Easy as Narrator: "Daphne had gotten the money out of a locker at the YWCA. It was money she had gotten from Carter's family, $30,000.00, to leave town. She was still convinced though that her Negro blood didn't matter now that Terrell couldn't use it to keep the man that she wanted to marry out of the mayor's race. She was in love and couldn't see for dreaming any better than the rest of us I guess. Cause even though we had fought a war to keep the world free, the color line in America worked both ways and even a rich white man like Todd Carter was afraid to cross it.

Interest Convergence

Easy is hired because of his race by a white man in an effort to find a white woman who prefers the companionship of black men. As the movie unfolds, two white mayoral candidates attempt to hire Easy as his investigation into missing photographs deepens. In the most basic sense, the white men in the film are willing to partner with Easy, and are willing to overlook his race in order to achieve and end goal of surviving a political election, a more literal example of interest convergence housed within the film's plot.

Easy narrates multiple scenes as the film begins in the summer of 1948. Several scenes and narrations set the tone and confirm the racial climate, specifically the era's defined color line. The film's noir also becomes embedded in the dark racial climate. For example, following Easy's firing, he is introduced to Albright by his black friend and bar owner Joppy. Albright is a white man and he hires Easy to find Daphne. During this initial introduction, Joppy says to Albright in the presence of Easy, "And he's one of the few colored men around here who owns his own house. Shoot, he pays a mortgage every month just like a white man." A later scene unfolds as Easy travels to meet Albright where he shares that his purpose for hiring Easy is because, "Daphne has a predilection for the company of Negroes. She likes jazz, and pigs feet, and dark meat, know what I mean."

While the film is rift with derogatory racial related content, perhaps a justifiable reflect of 1940s America where the setting takes place, the film still possesses redeeming qualities. Easy is identified as one of the few black men that own a home, and after losing his job on account of his

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race, he is able to persevere and earn enough money to maintain his home. Despite getting sucked into a volatile world of crime and murder, Easy is able to survive, demonstrating a characteristic of resilience. Film characters—such as Joppy—who made racist remarks about Easy die before the film's ending, thus reinforcing this idea that Easy is strong enough to survive in a world where others cannot.

The film also addresses the intersection of politics, illegal activities (child pornography and pedophiles), employment, culture, and lifestyle as they relate to race. The film was realistic in that ultimately race was superior to all other aspects of society. This is illustrated in Todd stating that he loved Daphne, but not enough to continue the relationship or marry her, given that she was biracial. In the end Daphne learned that her white phenotype was not enough to sustain the power and privileges that accompany whiteness. Daphne was willing to keep her biracial identity a secret to society in an effort to marry the future mayor and man she was in love with, but he rejected her.

Belle (2013) Summary

Similar to *Lost Boundaries*, *Belle* is a story based on true events involving Dido Elizabeth Belle (1761-1804) and the Zong massacre. The film begins in the year of 1769. Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay, one of the main characters, is biracial—the daughter of a black slave and a white man, Captain Sir John Lindsay. The film begins with Belle's father coming to take her from a life of poverty to live with his aunt and uncle, Lord and Lady Mansfield. Lord Mansfield is the Lord Chief Justice of the highest court. With reservations, Lord and Lady Mansfield allow Belle to live with them in addition to their other niece Elizabeth, who is white and around the same age as Belle. The two girls are reared together and have a relationship similar to that of sisters. Both girls' fathers die and Belle becomes an heiress with a significant dowry.

As Belle becomes older, she begins to question certain practices that exist as a result of her black heritage. For example, at one point in the film, she questions why is she ranked too high to eat with the slaves, but too low to eat with her family. Assisting in her critical thinking is an intern, Mr. Davinier, a white male, working with Lord Mansfield. This occurs at the same time that Belle and Elizabeth begin to date and are introduced to society. Through Mr. Davinier, Belle learns of the Zong massacre, a case of ship owners who murdered their slaves ("cargo") by throwing them overboard and filing a claim citing a loss with the insurance company. Lord Mansfield was responsible for the ruling of the case; however, he did not act right away and was under a considerable amount of pressure from both sides. Mr. Davinier and Belle communicated their opinion in wanting justice for the slaves. A white man proposed to Belle and she accepted, even though she had fallen in love with Mr. Davinier because Mr. Davinier was of too low a status to marry Belle. This film is unique in that there is a juxtaposition of race and class throughout. In the end, Belle calls off the engagement as she learns that he only wants to marry her for her money. Lord Mansfield ruled against the ship owners and spoke out against slavery in his ruling. He then agrees to continue mentoring Mr. Davinier so that he can achieve a status high enough as to not reduce Belle's status if they were to marry.

Figure 6. The Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) cover for the film *Belle* (2013).

Belle (2013) Preferred Reading

This film strategically enables the viewer to contemplate more than race when viewing

the film including social and economic status as two interwoven themes. The storyline provides a

phenomenal juxtaposition of race and class/social status. In this section, I will highlight specific

scenes as an example of the intersection of race and class. The conflict involving Belle's race

and class as it relates to wealth and social status are addressed in the beginning of the film. The

film begins in the year of 1769. Britain is a colonial empire and a slave trading capital. Slavery is

a way of life because it is the primary economic source. Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay is the

main biracial character the daughter of Captain Sir John Lindsay. Belle was born on English soil

and her father discovered her mother, a black slave, aboard a captured Spanish slave ship. As a

result of Belle having her father's blood, by law she was entitled to receive all of the benefits as

though she were white, with the exception of a few key formalities that separate blacks from

whites. In the opening scene, Belle's father travels to her with the intention of taking her to live

with his aunt and uncle, Lord and Lady Mansfield. Lord Mansfield (the uncle) is the Lord Chief

Justice and it appears that Belle is aged around 6 or 7 years old. The following is the

communication of Belle's father when he meets her for the first time.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: How lovely she is. Similar to her mother.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: Do not be afraid, I am here to take you to a good life. The life that you were born to.

> The next scene involves Captain Sir John Lindsay arriving with Belle at his uncle's

home. In this scene, he persuades Lord and Lady Mansfield to allow Belle to stay despite her

black blood, and justifies it with her social status as a result of him being her father. The

following is the communication between Captain Sir John Lindsay, Lord and Lady Mansfield,

and his Aunt Mary, who also resides in the home.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: Her mother is dead. I beg you Uncle love her as I would were I here and ensure that she is in receipt of all that is due to her as a child of mine.

> Lady Mansfield: That is simply impossible.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: What is right can never be impossible.

> Lady Mansfield: She's black.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: She is my blood.

> Aunt Mary: But she is black.

> Lord Mansfield: A detail you chose not to share with us!

> After the aunt and uncle agree to allow Belle to live with them, Belle's father has a

private moment with her. In this scene, Captain Sir John Lindsay shares his love for his daughter

with bold and endearing words. This will be his last time speaking to her. It is very apparent to

the viewer that the race of his daughter is not important.

> Captain Sir John Lindsay: Sweet child, the ship is no place for one so precious as you. In these walls yours will be the life equal to my blood. You will not understand in this moment but know in your heart that you are loved. Just as I loved your mother.

The issue of Belle's race immediately surfaces as her aunt and uncle deliberate about her impending arrival.

> Lady Mansfield: So now we have two nieces in our guardianship.
>
> Lord Mansfield: Elizabeth was in much need of a companion.
>
> Lady Mansfield: That's what we shall say. And that is what we shall say when questions are asked.
>
> Lord Mansfield: We shall say that in accordance with her birthright she is entitled to live beneath this roof. That is the nature of order.
>
> Lady Mansfield: And where in that order should her color be placed above or below her merry bloodline?

In this scene, the viewer can conclude that Lord Mansfield is consistent with his enforcement of the law. Although this is during the time of the slave trade, he does not agree with the excuse that Lady Mansfield proposes sharing with the public regarding Belle. Lord Mansfield argues that it is Belle's birthright to live with them.

Like many of the films viewed for this work, there were some scenes in which the main character Belle, displayed characteristics of the tragic mulatto. Additionally, there were instances of overt racism and parts of the film that also support the CRT tenet racism is normal. Although I am in opposition to racism and these acts, I still arrived at a preferred reading based on the films strong message of tolerance and the disruption of the status quo as it relates to race.

Tragic Mulatto

Once Belle and her cousin Elizabeth are at the dating age, they are informed that they will have guests for dinner one evening. Both girls are very excited, but Aunt Mary quickly informs Belle that she would not be dining with the guests. In another scene, Belle is taking a walk with Lord Mansfield and inquires about the situation. This conversation further adds to the plot involving the intersection of race and class.

Belle: Papa how may I be too high in rank to dine with the servants, but too low to dine with my family?

Lord Mansfield: Dinner with guests is a formal proceeding Dido. We simply can't impose upon visitors our disregard for those humanities.

Belle: Am I not wealthy now? An heiress?

This scene contributes to the tenet of racism is normal, because Belle possesses sufficient status and wealth to attend high class events, and yet her aunt and uncle and will obstruct her in finding a proper husband merely because of her race. Belle is allowed to travel with the family and participate in some events and not others.

While viewing this film, I had a thought concerning the struggles of the tragic mulatto. Prior to Belle's interactions with the gentlemen callers and communication with John Davinier she does not show signs of conflict as a result of being biracial. After Davinier shares with her that he has noticed twice that she could not dine with her family, Belle becomes very upset. Shortly after the conversation, she goes to her bedroom and rubs her hands, punches herself, and scratches her face. This is the most important scene in the film as it relates to the tragic mulatto character. From this, I concluded that it must be societal demands that contributes to the onset of such tragedy experienced by the tragic mulatto. The pressures as a result of a social order with specific distinctions and different methods of treatment for blacks.

In an abrupt and unjustified scene, the film trivializes Belle's biracial identity and presented the tragic mulatto. At bedtime, Belle is combing her hair and appears frustrated. It is apparent that the producer wanted to engage the viewer in the myth that black people have hair that is kinky and unmanageable in comparison to whites. Belle receives help with her hair from the black maid.

Maid: Can I help you with that Miss Lindsay?

Maid: You must start from the ends? My mother taught me.

The viewer is left to believe that because Belle did not have her black mother or other black people to around her, that she could not manage her hair. Because someone has managed to comb and style Belle's hair for many years prior throughout her childhood and adolescence, this scene is implausible, and desperately clinging to stereotypes.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence surfaces in Belle in many ways. The film presents the struggles of Belle's family coping with race, and this translates into the larger issues of race in society through Lord Mansfield's court case. There is little doubt that the personal story, the intimacy that Lord Mansfield shares with Belle, plays a role in his interpretation of the law. The film *Belle,* therefore, delves into the deep humanity of race; thus, a single relationship between two people ultimately plays a vast role in shaping the surrounding society through his legal ruling.

Another way in which interest convergence arises is when Belle's family is confronted with navigating the preservation of her family's status and wealth with the added wrinkle of her race. This is another example of a scene where the viewer is forced to determine which factor is more important: Belle's race or her social status.

Belle is forced to contend with having the dowry and social status to marry, but being denied due to her biracial identity. During the season of courtship Belle begins sneaking off and meeting with John Daviner in addition to privately finding out information about the Zong case. It is during this time that it becomes obvious that she and Daviner have a romantic connection. Although he accepts her biracial identity, he is of low social standing. Belle is frustrated as she is in a difficult position as it relates to a mate. Her race hinders her from marrying someone of her social status that is likely only marrying her for her dowry, and her social status hinders her from

marrying someone that she has a true connection with. The following is a conversation that Belle has with John Davinier about her future.

Belle: The alternative is to replace Lady Mary and her responsibilities at Kenwood.

John Davinier: But she's a spinster.

Belle: Papa did not trust that I could achieve a match that would raise my rank or even equal it.

John Davinier: You are above reducing yourself for the sake of rank. I pray he would marry you without a penny to your name. For that is the man who would truly treasure you.

Another reason that Lord Mansfield did not approve of Belle and Davinier courting is because he wanted to protect Belle from certain unpleasantries and oppressive events that involved blacks—specifically, the Zong massacre, which was an important event that took place during this film. Lord Mansfield is the Chief Justice of the highest court and must rule on the Zong's insurance claim. During the film, John Davinier and Lord Mansfield were involved in confrontational discussions around his potential ruling of the case. The following is the communication between the two men when they were on amicable terms.

John Davinier: Your ruling can bring the slave trade to its knees. It can destroy the economic foundation of this land. Is that pressure not maddening my lord?

Lord Mansfield: Let justice be done though the heavens may fall.

John Davinier: If the killing of the Negroes was truly necessary to save the ship as the Captain contends.

Lord Mansfield: I tell you no man happily disposes of his cargo. Let me ask you were you to enter a port with only one piece of merchandise left to trade what would you do. Swallow financial ruin or seek recompense from your insurer.

John Davinier: With due respect I should question whether human life should be insurable as cargo at all.

Although Lord Mansfield is a strong man and unwavering in as it relates to the law, many people began to question how he would rule in the Zong case as a result of his relationship with

Belle. Additionally, Belle and Davinier made comments and communicated their position that

the murdering of slaves on the Zong ship was wrong and that the owners should not receive

compensation from the insurance company. Lord Mansfield ruled against the owners of the Zong

ship as it was discovered that they implemented improper techniques for storing slaves and they

had become diseased. The owners of the ship claimed that they had to sacrifice the slaves due to

the shortage of water, but it was discovered that they had several opportunities to replenish water

and did not take advantage of them. The Zong ruling became a seminal step towards the

abolition of slavery. Additionally, Lord Mansfield went a step further and shared his personal

opinion of slavery. It is my belief that the addition of a personal statement contributed to the

CRT tenet interest convergence and it showed his love for Belle and her black heritage.

> Lord Mansfield: It is my opinion that the state of slavery is so odious a position that nothing may support it.

It is my hope that this film is indicative of the types of biracial films that viewers can look

forward to in the future.

In this chapter, I have outlined the research related to the use of films in multiple

disciplines, the research processes and procedures conducted to obtain available biracial films,

provided an outline of the Encoding/Decoding theory, summaries of each biracial films analyzed,

and provided my readings of the films using the encoding and decoding process through a CRT

lens. This type of analysis is similar to that of James Trier (2013) in his article titled

"Challenging Waiting for Superman through Detournement."

After reflecting upon my experience with analyzing the biracial films, I considered my

audience and the context of the professional learning experience in which the pedagogical

project would be implemented. I also began questioning whether it would be realistic to ask that

school leaders watch an entire film and conduct such an analysis. As a result, I decided to use

shorter video clips to engage school leaders in the pedagogical project. This technique is similar to that what Trier (2007a; 2007b) described in "Cool Engagements with YouTube: Part 1" and "Cool Engagements with YouTube: Part 2." This would also allow school leaders to take additional time for discussions and engagement, which will allow them to reflect upon their individual schools. Additionally, I thought it might be beneficial to approach the professional learning experience from a growth mindset and equity perspective.

CHAPTER IV: THE PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT

Transformative Leadership

I will begin this chapter with a brief introduction to some of the relevant transformative leadership literature to further justify the value of the pedagogical project. I do not make claims to have exhausted the transformative leadership literature because it is not necessary for the purposes of this dissertation.

Transformative leadership for the purpose of this work is defined using the distinctions in Shields (2010). A transformative leader, "therefore, recognizes the need to begin with critical reflection and analysis and to move through enlightened understanding to action-action to redress wrongs and to ensure that all members of the organization are provided with as level a playing field as possible-not only with respect to access but with regard to academic, social, and civic outcomes" (Shields, 2010, p. 572). It is important to note that researchers have not identified one single characteristic of transformative leadership. Moreover, View, DeMulder, Kayler, & Stribling, (2009) stated that it is "multi-layered". Therefore, the participants in the professional learning experience will likely vary with their knowledge and skills related to transformative leadership. In fact, one could argue that a transformative educational leader is always seeking areas in which to improve in their leadership, thus never truly defining them as such.

Race and racism is deemed one of the most controversial topics in the United States, specifically in the context of a "nice field like education" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Noblit and Mendez (2008), however, posited that "public education is a fully racialized endeavor" (p. 1). It is well documented that educational leadership preparation programs have fallen short of

preparing school leaders with the practical strategies necessary to disrupt the status quo and eliminate racial inequities. As a result, many educational researchers have completed work that include strategies that can be used to develop social justice leaders and thus transformative leadership (Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2009; Dantley, 2003; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hafner, 2010; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Shields, 2009; View, DeMulder, Kayler, & Stribling, 2009; Young & Laible, 2000).

Embedded in the work of Freire's (1970) transformative leadership are the mandates of critique and inquiry, self-reflection, and action (Cooper, 2009; Dantley, 2003; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Shields, 2009; View et al., 2009). Transformative leadership for social justice has become popular among researchers, and is mostly informed by critical theory (Cooper, 2009). This type of leadership requires "a substantive change in the very definition and implementation of traditional school leadership" (Dantley, 2003, p. 3). Transformative leadership is important to this work because it "inextricably links educational leadership [public schools] with the wider diverse social context [popular culture] within which it is embedded" (Shields, 2009, p. 55). Transformative leaders ask critical questions about democracy and works toward social justice and equity for all students (Dantley, 2003; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Shields, 2009; Weiner, 2003; View; 2009). Foster (1986) was the first to use transformative in educational leadership, positing that leaders "must be critically educative; it cannot only look at the conditions in which we live, but it must also decide how to change them" (p. 185).

Brown (2004) asserted that "although many agree that theory, research, and practice should be intertwined to support the type of schooling (and society) that values rather than marginalizes, few scholars offer ground-breaking, pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders" (p. 77). Brown contended that educational leadership preparation

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programs should prepare school leaders to be "critically reflective" and to engage in "critical inquiry and self-reflection" (p. 91). In this author's recommendations for educational leadership preparation programs, Brown proposed an "alternative pedagogy" that engages students in critically reflective "strategies" (p. 84). Brown detailed eight "transformative pedagogical strategies," including: (a) cultural autobiographies, (b) life histories, (c) prejudice reduction workshops, (d) reflective analysis journals, (e) cross-cultural interviews, (f) educational plunges, (g) diversity panels, and (h) activist action plans (micro, meso, and macro levels).

In the next section, I will provide a brief summary of each strategy using information from Brown's appendix titled, "Transformative Learning Strategies for Preparing Leaders for Social Justice." In this section, the author offered descriptions of and rationales for the recommended strategies:

> 1. Cultural Autobiographies are described as autobiographies that contain information about a person's culture, values, countries that are significant to their family, their attitudes towards people who are different from them, and what impacted those beliefs.
>
> 2. Life Histories are the result of an adult learner interviewer someone who is older than 65 years of age and attended school in the United States. Students are expected to synthesize the information about the interviewee's schooling experience and relate it to course material.
>
> 3. Prejudice Reduction Workshops are described as participants participating in a 1- day workshop organized by The National Coalition Building Institute. The experience participatory activities that empower leaders to build more inclusive schools, workplaces, and communities.
>
> 4. Reflective Analysis Journals are written thoughts that should occur over the course of an adult leaders' graduate program to identify and clarify worldview, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and challenges.
>
> 5. Cross-Cultural Interviews are when the individual has an encounter with a person of a different race/ethnicity for the purpose of being exposed to a different worldview and increase their comfort level of discussing difference. The person should be 18 years of age of older and must have attended school in the United States. Adult learners are expected to describe their emotional reaction to the interview as well as insights and new knowledge obtained.

6. Educational Plunges involve the adult learners selecting an activity that will challenge them beyond their current level of comfort. For example, visiting an educational setting that is different from those in which they have attended (e.g., Catholic, private, prison, poor urban, wealthy academies) and describe the experience, reason for selecting the experience, reaction to the experience, how it related to the course content, and implications for them as educational leaders for social justice leaders and equity.

7. Diversity Panels are 1-hour panels conducted during class time with others in the class who have chosen the same monolithic group to study in depth. The groups assign readings, share their educational experiences, and conduct a question and answer session with the class members.

8. Activist Action Plans involve adult learners' discussion of what they might do to implement policies and practices that are truly just, equitable, and inclusive. They first identify potential issues and address action versus inaction. One technique might include the use of educational equity profiles.

Educational Leadership and Film

English and Steffy (1997) employed another "critically reflective" strategy that they

outlined in an article entitled, "Using Film to Teach Leadership in Educational Administration."

These authors contended that film as a teaching medium is powerful in many ways. The

following are the six advantages that they detailed were beneficial specifically for teaching

students of educational administration:

1.   It presents a longitudinal view of a leader and decisions in contact.

2. Film is able to portray a view of artistry in leadership.

3. Film is able to illustrate the connection between the leader's belief and values and action.

4. Film is able to depict the relationship between leadership cadres and networking.

5. Film is able to depict leader's moral code.

6. Films show discourse on many levels.

Similar to the strategies and pedagogical activities outlined above, this chapter will include a description of a 3-day pedagogical project that is designed and marketed as a critical professional learning experience around the use of popular culture, in the form of videos (YouTube, TED, etc.), specifically for school leaders, but can be used with other professionals, such as police officers. My conceptualizing of this work is inspired by others who have used film and other media texts as methods of engaging students in pedagogical activities using pop culture (English & Steffy, 1997; Giroux, 1993; Hafner, 2010; Luke, 1993; Robertson, 1995; Trier, 2005; View et al., 2009).

The Project

One of the primary goals for this project is for the school leaders to develop a growth mindset about equity and to obtain a greater awareness of black-white biracial history and societal perceptions of biracial people. The completion of this project will involve challenging the participants' knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs about race, racial equity, and biracial people. It is my aim that participants will increase their awareness of race, racism, privilege, and power. Luke (1993) contended that "it is possible to start with the kinds of issues many students resist (e.g., sexism and racism) and with texts that they know well (e.g., television) in order to take them to a politicized and theoretical understanding of how they read and are constructed by and in culture" (p. 55). The pedagogical activities are designed to assist the school leaders in implementing practical uses for "high theory" when managing race related challenges and activities within the school. Luke (1993) described this process of using pop culture to mitigate the challenges that occur with students, as a result of the difficulty of reading high theory texts, as teaching through the "backdoor." The author suggested that this method of teaching gives students "a new conceptual vocabulary to talk about what they already live and 'know' in

everyday contexts: from pastiche, semiotics, and ideologies of production/consumption to dualist structures of meaning, genre, narrative, intertextuality, and postmodern identities and representations" (p. 48).

As a graduate student, I have been limited in my opportunities to offer professional learning to school leaders, but I have planned this project with the intention of conducting it in the future. This project will remain a working document, in which I anticipate adjusting after conducting a critical reflection and reviewing feedback from participants. Ideally, I would like to begin by implementing the project with a pilot group. In my experience, it is rare that school leaders—especially assistant principals—have the opportunity to attend professional learning experiences. Most assistant principals that I have interacted with value the opportunity to collaborate and network with their colleagues. I therefore anticipate that there will be rich dialogue and in-depth discussions about their experiences, strategies, and beliefs about race and race relations in their schools and/or school district.

My projection is that the participants will find the process of participating in pedagogical activities—including the analysis of videos through theoretical lenses from academic texts—to be worthwhile, engaging, and rewarding (English & Steffy, 1997; Trier, 2007b; View et al., 2009). In the next three chapters of this work, I will detail the academic text, theories, and pedagogical activities that school leaders will engage in over the course of three sessions. In these chapters, I will outline and highlight the Google Slides presentations that the facilitator developed to use during the professional learning experience. The Google Slides presentations are located in the appendix of this work. After reflecting upon the process and experience with analyzing the biracial films, I considered my targeted audience and the context of the professional learning experience in which the pedagogical project would be implemented. I also

questioned whether if it would be realistic to ask that school leaders watch an entire film and conduct such an analysis. As a result, I decided to use shorter video clips to engage school leaders in the pedagogical project. This technique is similar to that what Trier (2007a; 2007b) described in "Cool Engagements with YouTube: Part 1" and "Cool Engagements with YouTube: Part 2." This would also allow school leaders additional time for discussions and engagement that will allow them to reflect upon their individual schools. Moreover, I thought that it might be beneficial to approach the professional learning experience from a growth mindset and equity perspective.

As I mentioned earlier, it was necessary to consider the targeted participants of school leaders when designing the pedagogical project. This prompted me to design the project with a growth mindset and equity focus that will lead to the discussion of biracial individuals. Additionally, a biracial specific professional learning experience—presented on Day Four— emerged from the analysis of the biracial films and creation of the 3-day professional learning experiences described in Chapters V, VI, and VII. I will discuss this professional learning experience further in Chapter VIII; however, it will not be outlined in the same manner because it has not been finalized.

The next section of this chapter consists of the researcher's educational story. Although I have already explained my personal interest and commitment to the equity of biracial individuals, there are other advantages to highlighting this group. As mentioned several times before, race can be a contentious topic; it often makes people uncomfortable and reluctant to participate in discussion. I anticipate sharing this story with participants prior to beginning the work of the 3-day professional learning experience. It will serve to ground the school leaders and remind them that education is the focus. Additionally, the educational story can be used as an

example of a CRT tenet that the participants will become familiar with on the first day of the professional learning experience.

The researcher acknowledges that this pedagogical project will likely be as minimally contributing to the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to expose and develop school leaders. Due to the lack of critical professional experiences of school leaders, I posit that this introduction to critical theories is meaningful and the use videos allows for a neutral space to communicate and discuss equity.

My Educational Story

I am the daughter of teenage parents reared by my maternal grandparents in a rural area of North Carolina. Neither my parents, nor my former sharecropping grandparents, were able to obtain a high school diploma; they held numerous jobs-low paying employment, often simultaneously. It is not difficult, therefore, for me to relate to the educational research about black students (often labeled as at-risk) living in poverty, in underfunded schools, and with under-qualified teachers. Although I lived in my maternal grandparents' home, it is also important to note that my parental grandparents were also very influential in my life and invested numerous financial and emotional resources into my educational pursuit. Additionally, my parents were never married, but were and are supportive and involved in my life.

Despite the fact that many of my immediate family members did not obtain a high school diploma, I learned at a very early age that education was very important. My grandmother proved to be the most influential person in my life, based on her actions and countless sacrifices. For example, it was common for me to call her after school to request that she purchase "required" school supplies on her way home from work. Most of these things were the latest items that I wanted to keep up with my white classmates that were likely of a higher

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socioeconomic status. Another example of her dedication to my education was her commitment to attend parent-teacher conferences during her busy workday, as it likely resulted in a loss of wages. Without fail, "Mama" would take us school shopping for new clothes every year. Although it may have only been from the clearance section at Tallhimers, it was better than most children experienced in my community. The final memory that I will share in proving my grandmother's commitment to my education occurred when I was in high school. We were in the car at a local fast food restaurant and she began to explain that a certain number of dollars from her life insurance policy was allocated to pay for my college education in the event of her untimely death. For me, this was the experience in which I knew without a doubt that I would successfully attend college.

I will now share some of my most memorable experiences related to my peers that framed my views about school and schooling. During my first year of school, kindergarten, I distinctly remember my teacher taking some of my classmates in the hallway (approximately eight of us) for a discussion. She shared that there were some of us in the class that knew the alphabet, numbers, and had other skills; as a result, we would be moving to another classroom. For the next 2 to 3 years, I remember myself and these classmates sitting in the back of what I now know was a combination classroom, at some periods behind a partition, "doing our thing." This "thing" involved completing handouts and phonics worksheets without any direct instruction. As you can imagine, this thing also involved being off task with communication about any and everything that we chose to engage in. Overall, this experience likely enforced the idea that I was "smart"—an adjective often used by my family members to describe me.

As I mentioned earlier, my grandparents were hard-working people. The reality of this fact was that they typically left for work before my school bus arrived and often arrived home

late at night. For a period when I was probably in the first or second grade, my grandmother would drop me off at a neighboring family's home to board the school bus. We also attended the same church located in the community. This family had a school-aged daughter who was in a grade ahead of me. On one morning she and her mother began engaging me in a conversation about the honor roll, because I believe this information was printed in the local newspaper. I am unsure if I even knew what the honor roll was at the time of this conversation. From what I recall, the overall theme of the conversation was that the daughter was jealous because I made the A honor roll and she made the AB honor roll. It is likely that this conversation increased my motivation for school and self-esteem as it related to my abilities. To some extent, I remember being envious of her stay-at-home mom who assisted in selecting her clothes and spending a significant amount of time styling her hair each morning. I recall from a very young age having to choose my own clothes and eating quick breakfast foods that I grabbed or prepared for myself. My grandparents were secure in knowing that I would receive a free breakfast at school.

A similar memory comes from me overhearing an older cousin's conversation with his peer who happened to be my maternal aunt. He shared that he overheard one of my classmate's being punished/yelled at by his father, because my grades or scores on an end of school year standardized test were higher. I once had a conversation with this same father at church, and he shared with me that my principal was "bragging" about my academic achievement when he met with him at school. Being a naive elementary school student, I did not think that the principal knew my name, much less information about my academic achievement.

I share these stories for many reasons; one is because they support my belief that parental involvement takes many forms, and does not necessarily mean that the parent has to be physically present in the school building. These stories also show that the parents of my

classmates mentioned likely had more economic resources, education, and flexibility to participate in school programs, but I achieved higher academically. Lastly, I share these experiences because during a professional development experience while serving as an assistant principal, I was asked to think about my most influential teachers. Although I do not recall the exact description of the task, I do remember being asked something similar to share experiences about the teacher that was caring or sparked an interest in academics for you. It was during the brainstorming part of this activity that I realized that my successful navigation through my K-12 schooling was not because of the motivation and inspiration from my teachers, but due to the intrinsic motivation that was inspired by my family and home life.

I conclude by saying that while most would classify my current status as an educator and a contributing member of society as successful. My siblings, who had the same upbringing as I did, did not fare as well with their schooling experiences; they did not earn a high school diploma. I perceive that this contributed to my brother's lifestyle and premature death as a result of a senseless murder. I have also come to understand that my grandmother—the same woman who I credit for my achievement—played a role in my sister's decision to drop out of high school and pursue full-time employment. My explanation for this is that my grandmother realized that she did not acquire adequate cultural capital or assimilation techniques to be successful in school.

During my K-12 period of schooling, I credit my obtainment of cultural capital to popular culture in the form of television, movies, and print media, as well as interactions with white students at school and through my grandmother's employers. I vividly remember desiring certain material items and adopting behaviors based on characters from television shows. I also recall observing my grandmother's humble and professional nature. She was the master of "code-

switching," the practice of shifting the languages one uses or the way one expresses oneself during conversations. My sister and I would often mock her conversations on the telephone in which she talked clearly and with her best grammar. For sake of the many students like my siblings, I argue that school leaders cannot rely solely on students receiving the motivation necessary for academic achievement from their parents and communities.

The facilitator will refrain from sharing information about her interracial marriage and biracial child with the participants at this juncture in the professional learning experience in an effort to allow the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their views when participating in activities that are specific to biracial people. This information may be disclosed at the end of Day Three. This may be disclosed earlier if a participant has knowledge of the information and brings it to light or if for some reason the facilitator is asked a personal question specific to biracial people. In the next three chapters, I will detail my example of a "pragmatic" approach to developing critically reflective school leaders by merging critical theory and popular culture.

CHAPTER V: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE "DAY ONE"

Objectives

The participants will acquire knowledge of the concepts of growth mindset and grit.
The participants will acquire knowledge of implicit social cognition and critical race theory.
The participants will complete a gender and race Implicit Association Test (IAT).
The participants will acquire new vocabulary for discussing what they already know about equity, race, and racism.

Outcomes

The participants will develop a growth mindset about equity, particularly racial equity.
The participants will practice the application of grit while completing the professional learning experience.
The participants will develop an increased awareness of race, racism, power, and privilege within their personal and professional lives.
The participants will identify experiences during the session that challenged their knowledge and assumptions of race and racial equity and ways in which they can apply the information and theories learned.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to detail Day One of the Google Slides presentation that is provided in the appendix of this work. This first day of the 3-day professional learning experience was designed to introduce participants to academic concepts and theories using popular culture. The presentation involves using popular pedagogy in the form of videos and film to facilitate participants learning of theories and ultimately their ability to apply the theories into real-life situations. This presentation is my version of a simple curated approach to some of the resources, theories, and strategies available for navigating racial biases and race relations. With that in mind, parts of the presentation were created in a manner in which it can be adapted for participants that are not educators.

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Day One of this professional learning experience introduces participants to growth mindset, implicit social cognition, and Critical Race Theory tenets. The focus of the first day is assisting participants in developing a growth mindset about racial equity, acknowledging implicit biases about race, and attaining an understanding of the Critical Race Theory tenets. During the second day of the professional learning experience, the participants will learn and apply Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding theory. The videos in the latter part of Day Two were selected to prepare the participants for Day Three. They are related to interracial relationships and one features an interracial couple and a biracial child. Day Three is devoted to the topic of biracial individuals. During this session, the participants will learn about the history of biracial people in the United States. The participants will also have the opportunity to reflect on their individual schools and create a product using two articles that I outlined in Chapter II of this work.

The Presentation

The presentation begins with a title slide that includes the facilitator's information. This slide may be updated to include the facilitator's credentials and contact information. This slide will be projected for participants as they arrive for the professional learning experience. The facilitator will also welcome participants and give them an overview of the day's events, including the necessary facility information such as restroom locations.

The next slide consists of an agenda with a brief title of the activities that will occur. The facilitator may adjust the agenda depending on the audience. The rationale for not sharing detailed information about the activities is because participants may be familiar with videos or activities; this may prompt them to talk about sensitive topics too far in advance. Instead, the facilitator may provide an agenda with general information related to the session such as break and lunch times.

Growth Mindset

The next section consists of six total slides that introduce the participants to growth

mindset research. The first slide in this section of the presentation is titled "Mindset Reflection

Activity" and involves the participants reflecting upon an experience in which they changed their

mind/mindset about an idea, issue, or situation. The purpose of this activity is to encourage

participants to begin thinking about changing their mind/mindset about something. The

facilitator expects that all participants will be able to share an experience. The facilitator chose

this activity because it is likely that many of the participants will have differing views about

some of the topics during the professional learning experience. It is the facilitator's desire that

this activity will influence participants to keep an open-mind when addressing differences. The

following information and questions are printed on the slide.

1. Think about a time in which you changed your mind/mindset about an idea, issue, or

   situation.

2. Describe the situation and answer the following questions.

   a. Why did you change your mind?

   b. What factors do you believe played a role in you changing your mind?

The facilitator intentionally will not give specific guidelines related to the type of idea, issue, or

situation. The purpose is for the participants to develop a sense of community and openness to

discussion. Therefore, the responses will likely consist of personal and professional and may not

involve controversial topics.

The fourth slide provides the participants with a visual of growth mindset and asks the

participants "What does it mean to have a growth mindset?" The facilitator will ask the

participants to write their answers, share their responses with partners or a small group, and then share with the entire group.

Figure 7. The image is pictured on slide four of the presentation.

The fifth slide introduces the participants to Dr. Carol S. Dweck's book about mindset. At this time, the facilitator will provide information about Dr. Dweck and a brief summary of what it means to have a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. The text on this slide can be found on page seven in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. The facilitator only provides a summary of the concept, because it is likely that many participants have prior knowledge of the text.
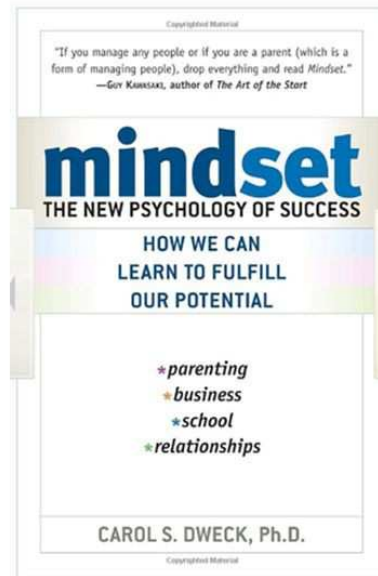
Figure 8. Dr. Carol S. Dweck is a professor at Stanford University.

The sixth slide is an image contrasting growth and fixed mindset. The images use quotations to describe each concept. The bottom of the slide reads, "The message is: You can change your mindset." The purpose of this slide is to motivate participants for the potentially challenging discussions and work that they will encounter as the professional learning experience progresses. It is the facilitator's hope that this will level the playing field by acknowledging that everyone can change and has room for growth.

Figure 9. Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset.

Developing Grit

The next section of the presentation focuses on motivating participants to increase their perseverance in challenging situations. Specifically, the facilitator anticipates that the racially driven conversations may be challenging. The seventh slide is the first slide of the presentation that contains a video link. This TED video clip is 6 minutes and 12 seconds (6:12) in length and titled *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance* and is given by Angela Lee Duckworth. Angela Lee Duckworth is a psychologist, academic, and a former teacher. Her first book, entitled *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, was released in May 2016. Duckworth has been credited as the psychologist that made "grit" the buzzword in education-policy circles.

In this video, Duckworth shares her experience with teaching and student success when she taught seventh grade math. She contends that a better understanding of students and learning from a motivational and psychological perspective is needed. She describes her experience after she left the teaching profession to become a psychologist. Duckworth describes how she began

to research the potential success of individuals in different contexts. Some of those places where she conducted research were West Point Military Academy, the National Spelling Bee, rookie teachers in tough neighborhoods, and private companies with salespeople. Duckworth shares that "grit" was the one characteristic that emerged as a significant predictor of success. She shares that scientist know little about developing grit. Duckworth credits Dr. Carol S. Dweck's research about "growth mindset" as the best idea that she has heard of for developing grit in kids.

The facilitator will show the participants this video to review the concept of "growth mindset" (Dweck) and to serve as motivation for participant development of "grit" (Duckworth) for the remainder of the professional learning experience. The facilitator acknowledges that the topics, discussions, and work involved in the remainder of the professional learning experience may take some perseverance/grit from the participants. The following are the three questions that participants will be asked to answer after viewing the video.

1. What did you think about the video?

2. What are your thoughts about the video as it relates to growth mindset and grit?

3. How do you think this video might be related to this professional learning experience?

The facilitator will direct participants to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the video.

Figure 10. Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth during the TED presentation.

Gender Bias

Slide nine introduces the participants to gender bias. The facilitator will not give the participants an introduction to the video in order to avoid shaping the participant reactions. This video specifically targets gender bias. The facilitator will begin the professional learning experience with gender bias as opposed to racial bias, in an effort to give participants an opportunity to become more comfortable with each other and with participating in discussions about potential controversial topics.

The purpose of this video is to encourage the participants to begin thinking about biases other than race. The professional learning does have a racial focus, biracial people, but the facilitator assumes that gender discussions are not usually as confrontational as race discussions. Thus beginning with the topic of gender bias. The title of the video is "#LikeAGirl: How it All Started," created by Always. Always is a brand of feminine hygiene products including maxi pads, pantyliners, and wipes that are produced by Proctor & Gamble. Always shared that the video originated through a campaign to attract a new generation of consumers. The phrase "like a

girl" evolved from one of many ideas and has been used in derogatory ways for many years. The video became the centerpiece of the campaign in capturing participants' interpretation of the phrase. In the video, males and females of different ages are asked to answer and display what "like a girl" means and what it means to do things "like a girl." For example, participants were asked to run, throw, and fight like a girl. Most of the participants answered and reacted in a derogatory manner; however, the video shows that some of the participants are given an opportunity to reflect and change their answers or actions. The social hashtag #LikeAGirl was also said to be important for the campaign. There is a 1-minute (1:00) version of the video, but the facilitator will show longer version that is 3 minutes and 19 seconds (3:19).

Also, the facilitator acknowledges that it is well-known that most K-12 public educators are white female. It is therefore likely that many of the participants in the professional learning experience will be white female. Moreover, it is more likely that the white females will be able to relate to gender bias and oppression as opposed to racial bias. The facilitator may note that even as a black female, she was able to think critically about the video and identify areas in which she could grow in regards to gender equity.

Figure 11. A participant from the *#LikeAGirl: How it All Started* video.

Slide 10 contains five reflection questions. The facilitator will direct participants

to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the video.

The questions are listed below.

1. What do you think of the video?

2. How did the video make you feel?

3. What are some examples of a *fixed mindset* from the video?

4. What are some examples of a *growth mindset* from the video?

5. What are some examples of other phrases that are similar to "Like a Girl"?

Implicit Social Cognition

Slide 11 consists of an image that is made up of nine smaller images of individuals

holding signs with a biased statement written on them. Some of the statements are "Muslims are

not all terrorists," "I can actually see you," and "My hair is real." Through this slide, the

facilitator will introduce the participants to the concept of implicit social cognition or implicit

bias. The participants will be given an opportunity to reflect, write, and share their answer to the

question "What is implicit social cognition or implicit bias?"

Figure 12. This image displaying bias statements appears on slide eleven of this
presentation.

Slide 12 aids the facilitator in introducing the topic of implicit social cognition to assist

participants in understanding that we all have biases. It includes information about the topic. The

facilitator hopes to make all participants comfortable with discussions about race by

acknowledging that everyone can improve as it relates to racial biases, competence, and race

relations.

Slide 13 contains a link to a video that was created by The Kirwan Institute for the Study

of Race and Ethnicity and explains implicit bias and the impact that it can have on a person's

life. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is an interdisciplinary engaged

research institute at The Ohio State University established in May 2003. The Kirwan Institute for

the Study of Race and Ethnicity states that its mission is "we work to create a just and inclusive

society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed." The purpose of the

video is to expand participant knowledge of implicit social cognition. The video is titled

"Implicit Bias, Lifelong Impact," and it provides an animated explanation of the cumulative

effect of implicit bias over a lifetime. The video is 5 minutes and 40 seconds (5:40) long. After

the video, the participants will have an opportunity to reflect and discuss with partners or small

groups and with the entire group.

Figure 13. Image from the YouTube video "Implicit Bias, Lifelong Impact."
  Slide 14 contains a link to a video that will serve as an introduction to the Implicit

Association Test that participants will complete. The video is titled *Know Your Bias: Implicit*

Bias. The video is of a researcher sharing a brief summary of implicit bias, how it impacts

individuals in society, and some results of completed research supporting the theory of implicit

bias. The video is 6 minutes and 17 seconds (6:17) long. After the video, the participants will

have an opportunity to reflect and discuss with partners or small groups and with the entire group.
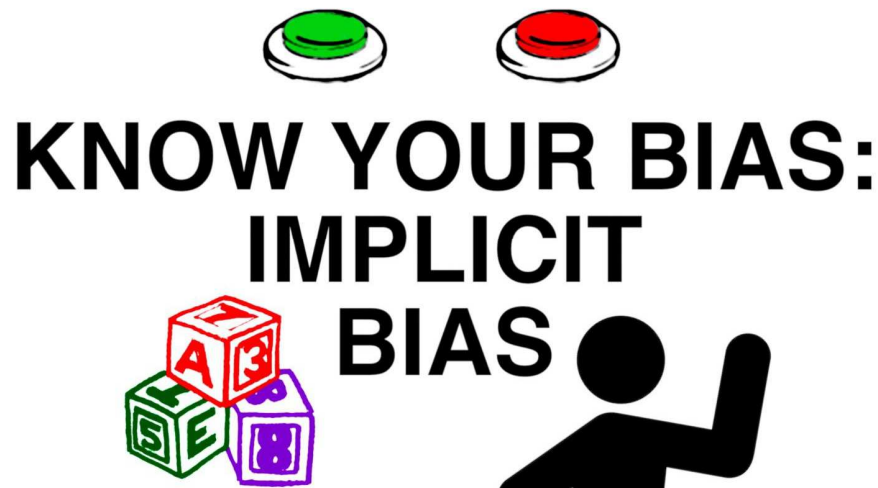
Figure 14. Image from the YouTube video "Know Your Bias: Implicit Bias."
Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Slide 15 begins the process of the participants completing an Implicit Association Test (IAT). The facilitator will provide a summary describing the purpose of the IAT. This test is associated with Harvard University research and the following information was taken from the Project Implicit website, "The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude that you did not know about. For example, you may believe that women and men should be equally associated with science, but your automatic associations could show that you (like many others) associate men with science more than you associate women with science." In keeping with the rationale that gender biases are likely easier to address than racial biases, the participants will compete the "Gender-Career IAT" first, although there may be majority female participants, and although it is likely that they will have a bias linking family and females and career and males. The website reads, "This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males."

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The facilitator will review the disclaimer associated with the test prior to directing participants to take the test. Participants may choose not to participate. The following disclaimer is provided on the website prior to taking an IAT. The facilitator will read and review the disclaimer with participants prior to them competing the test. The disclaimer reads, "Important disclaimer: In reporting to you results of any IAT test that you take, we will mention possible interpretations that have a basis in research done (at the University of Washington, University of Virginia, Harvard University, and Yale University) with these tests. However, these Universities, as well as the individual researchers who have contributed to this site, make no claim for the validity of these suggested interpretations. If you are unprepared to encounter interpretations that you might find objectionable, please do not proceed further. You may prefer to examine general information about the IAT before deciding whether or not to proceed." Lastly, participants will be asked to predict their preference/results and write them down using the terms strong, moderate, slight, and little.

Slide 16 includes seven reflection questions that the participants will answer after completing the Gender-Career IAT. The facilitator will ask the participants to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the IAT. This slide ends the first part of the first day of the professional learning experience. After lunch, the facilitator will introduce the topic of race. Slide 17 is the slide that will be displayed when the participants are allowed to break for lunch.

Race

Slide 18 introduces the topic of race. This is the first time during Day One of the professional learning experience that the facilitator will directly introduce and discuss race. The slide links to a video titled "The Talk." The facilitator will show this video in order to introduce participants to the race portion of the professional learning experience. This commercial was created by Proctor & Gamble and launched in 2017, with "The Talk" referencing race. In the video, black parents are making subtle comments to educate their black children on racial profiling, race related biases, and racism. The video validates the need for a discussion about race and racism as it relates to our current society. The video is 1 minute and 10 seconds (1:10) long.

Figure 15. Image from the Proctor & Gamble video *The Talk.*

Slide 19 contains three reflection questions. The facilitator will direct participants to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the video. The questions are listed below.

1. What are your thoughts about the commercial?

2. Who do you think the commercial is intended for? Why?

3. Why do you think Procter & Gamble created this commercial?

Slide 20 contains a link to a video of a news clip from CBS Evening News in response to "The Talk" commercial. The video is linked to an article titled "Procter & Gamble's new ad 'The Talk' tackles more than selling soap." The video also includes a response from Procter & Gamble's Chief Brand Officer Marc Pritchard. A woman who appears to be a black female offers information that could be considered criticism of the commercial. The video is 2 minutes and 24 seconds (2:24) long.

Figure 16. Proctor & Gamble's Chief Brand Officer Marc Pritchard.
Slide 21 contains two reflection questions. The facilitator will direct participants to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the video.

Slide 22 begins the process of participants completing the Race "Black – White" IAT. It is with this slide that the shifts to the discussion of racial bias focusing on black and white people. This discussion will ultimately lead to the topic of biracial individuals in the latter parts of Day Two and Day Three. The facilitator does not anticipate having to give the participants

detailed directions about the IAT process and will not review the "Important Disclaimer" again. Like the Gender-Career IAT, prior to completing the Race "Black – White" IAT, participants will be asked to predict their preference/results and write them down using the terms strong, moderate, slight, and little. The facilitator predicts that most participants will have a strong preference whites over blacks. Participants will have the option to choose not to complete the IAT. The website reads, "This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black."

Slide 23 has seven reflection questions that the participants will answer after completing the Race "Black – White" IAT. The facilitator will ask the participants to reflect, write, and share their responses to the questions and thoughts about the IAT. Slide 24 contains a link for a video about implicit bias. This video is of a black female giving a talk at a TEDx local event about her personal experiences with implicit bias. Her name is Melanie Funchess. Although it was not mentioned in the video, Melanie was homeless at 15 years old and was a ward of the state. She credits her adoptive mother for her success. Melanie is the director of community engagement for the Mental Health Association. This video also serves as an introduction and reference to the CRT tenet of "The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge" or counter-storytelling. The video is 16 minutes and 12 seconds (16:12) long.

Figure 17. Melanie Funchess is the director of community engagement for the Mental Health Association.

Critical Race Theory

The next section consists of slides 25-35 and describes the final part of the professional learning experience. During this section participants, will obtain knowledge of the six CRT tenets and constructs. The section includes video links to help the participants understanding of the tenets and constructs. This section ends with a video that was included to motivate participants to continue growing in the area of racial equity.

Slide 25 displays an image of the second edition cover of the text *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Delgado and Stefancic (2012). The facilitator predicts that most of the participants will not have much knowledge of CRT and the tenets. The facilitator will also utilize the CRT tenet of storytelling by sharing her story of being introduced to CRT in graduate school while pursuing a Masters in School Administration degree. The facilitator will emphasize the importance of having this theory as a lens and framework in which to view, navigate, and articulate the experiences associated with being a Black female and living in the United States.
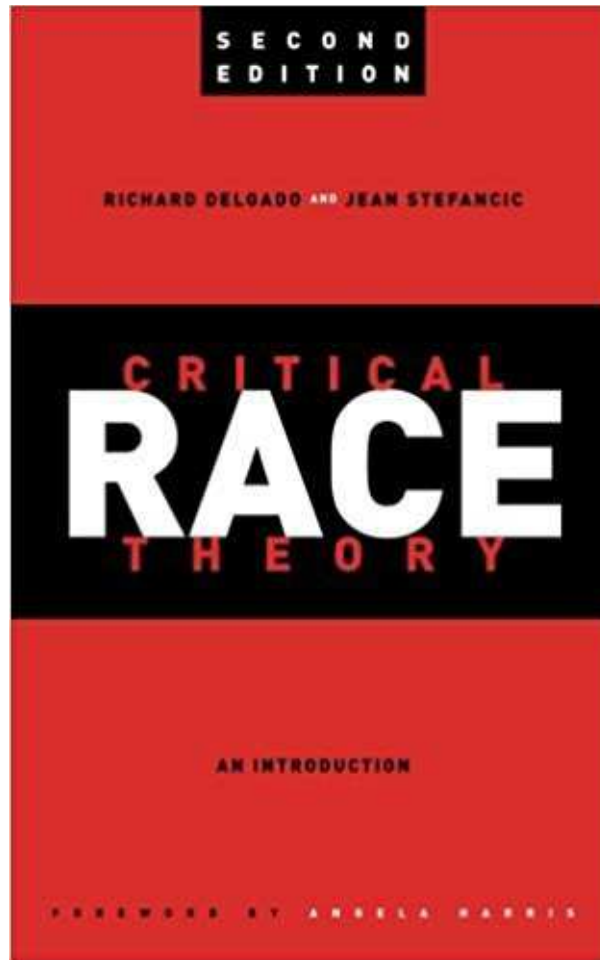
Figure 18. An image of Delgado and Stefancic's *Critical Race Theory.*

Slide 26 contains general information about the origins of CRT, its uses, and presence in educational research. Also, at this point in the presentation the facilitator will give each participant a copy of the chapter titled *Critical Race Theory and Education* from the Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education published in 2012. It is a short and easy read, consisting of less than five pages, while effectively summarizing the tenets of CRT. Participants will not be required to read the article during the professional learning experience, but it will serve as a resource. Slide 27 lists the six basic tenets of CRT. The facilitator will also share with participants that not all critical race theorist subscribe to every tenet, and that the sixth tenet was

created by Derrick Bell. Derrick Albert Bell Jr. (November 6, 1930 – October 5, 2011) was the

first Black professor at Harvard Law School and is credited as one of the founders of CRT.

Slide 28 contains information explaining the tenet "The Centrality of Race and Racism."

The facilitator will provide a brief summary of the history of the United States as it relates to the

social construction of race as a means to justify slavery. As a result of this history critical race

theorists assert that racism is permanent. There is also a link to a video titled "Derrick Bell

Speaks on White Superiority & the Permanence of Racism," which is 2 minutes and 15 seconds

(2:15) long. In this video, Derrick Bell speaks on the permanence of race and racism, as well as

the CRT construct of whiteness as property.

Figure 19. Derrick Bell is credited as one of the founders of Critical Race Theory.

Slide 29 has information explaining the tenet "The Centrality of Experiential

Knowledge." The facilitator will refer the participants back to the video with Melanie Funchess

as an example of storytelling. Examples of storytelling can be also be found in this work in

Chapter I with my positionality statement and Chapter IV with my description of my schooling

experiences. The video link included on this slide was chosen as an example of storytelling. The

video is titled "TED TALKS LIVE Short – Unconscious Bias." The video consists of a

combination of live and video animation that highlights the experiences of a young minority

male. The video also highlights the voices and stories of other children. The video is 3 minutes

and 12 seconds (3:12) long.

Figure 20. Image from the video *TED TALKS LIVE Short ⸱⸱⸱ Unconscious Bias.*
      Slide 30 contains information explaining the tenet "Challenges the Dominant Ideology."

The video is titled "Cracking the Codes: Joy DeGruy, A Trip to the Grocery Store." The person

in the video describing the grocery store experience is Joy DeGruy. Dr. Joy DeGruy is a

nationally and internationally renowned researcher, educator, author and presenter. The

facilitator chose this video to give the participants an actual scenario that counters the claims of

neutrality, objectivity, and colorblindness are not valid. The video highlights the experiences of

two women, one white and one black, and illustrates how they experience different treatment

from the same cashier at a grocery story on the same day. The video also serves as an additional

example of the two previous CRT tenets, racism is normal and storytelling. The facilitator will

also highlight the importance of voice with members of the majority race that speak out against racism as described in the video. The video is 3 minutes and 56 seconds (3:56) long.

Figure 21. Dr. Joy DeGruy is a nationally and internationally renowned researcher, educator, author and presenter.

Slides 31 and 32 contain information explaining the tenets of CRT being "Interdisciplinary" and having a "Commitment to Social Justice." Slide 33 contains information explaining the tenet "Interest Convergence." The slide lists three examples that are often cited by critical theorists as well-known examples of interest convergence. The examples are the Emancipation Proclamation, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and the election of President Barack Obama. The facilitator will provide details supporting the interest convergence claims about the events. A link to a video is also included on this slide. It is another video with Derrick Bell titled "Derrick Bell in 2010 on Racism in the Era of Obama." In this video, Bell speaks on the permanence of race and racism as well as the tenet of interest convergence. The video is 4 minutes and 21 seconds (4:21) long.

Figure 22. Derrick Bell is credited as one of the founders of Critical Race Theory.

Slide 34 lists the CRT constructs. Slide 35 is the final slide for Day One of the

professional learning experience. This slide has a link to a video. The video is titled "How I

Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Discussing Race" from TEDx Hampshire College. The

presenter is John Randolph, also known as "Jay Smooth." He is a blogger, cultural commentator,

and radio host. Jay Smooth is also biracial; his mother is white and his father is black. In the

video, Jay shares that anti-racism is something that has to be maintained such as dental hygiene

as opposed to having your tonsils removed which is a one-time surgery. The facilitator will show

this video because it supports the growth mindset approach to racism. It is likely that participants

will feel overwhelmed with the content and intense topic of race from the professional learning

experience. It is the facilitator's aim that the participants to leave the session knowing that this

work is an ongoing process. The video is 11 minutes and 56 seconds (11:56) long.

Figure 23. Jay Smooth is a blogger, cultural commentator, and radio host.

CHAPTER VI: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE "DAY TWO"

Objectives

The participants will acquire introductory knowledge of Cultural Studies.

The participants will acquire knowledge of Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory.

The participants will learn the meaning of the terms preferred, negotiated, and oppositional as it relates to encoding and decoding theory.

The participants will participate in activities in which they apply encoding and decoding theory.

Outcomes

The participants will display an appreciation for others perspectives or readings of videos.

The participants will be able to identify other methods for applying the encoding and decoding theory.

The participants will develop an increased awareness of media representations of marginalized groups.

The participants will identify areas in which they can apply the theory within their personal and professional lives.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the content found in "Day Two" of the Google

Slides presentation, which serves as a part of the pedagogical project that is provided in the

appendix of this work. The second day of this professional learning experience was designed to

introduce participants to academic concepts and theories using popular culture. Specifically,

participants will receive an introduction to Cultural Studies and Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding

theory. The presentation involves using popular culture in the form of videos that will facilitate

participants learning of Encoding/Decoding theory. Participants will be able to conduct readings

of the videos using Encoding/Decoding, a tool that can be used beyond the professional learning

experience. The participant experience and analysis of videos will be similar to that in which I

shared in Chapter III of this work. This presentation is my version of a simple curated approach to some of the resources, theories, and strategies available related to biases and race relations in the media. With that in mind, I designed the presentation in a manner in which it can be adapted for participants that are not educators.

In creating this professional learning experience, I will intentionally and strategically introduce the theory and application of the theory with videos that do not have a racial focus. The purpose for this introduction is so that participants have an opportunity to learn the theory in a comfortable manner before adding the potential tension and apprehension that is often associated with race related conversations. Race is introduced and addressed in later videos. The race videos start with highlighting the black 1%, then racial tension between blacks and whites, and ends with black-white interracial relationships. This gradual introduction of controversial race related topics is designed to prepare the participants for the culminating focus of biracial people that will occur in the final day of the professional learning experience.

The Presentation

The presentation begins with a title slide that includes the facilitator's information. The facilitator will update this information including credentials and contact information. This slide will be projected for participants as they arrive for the professional learning experience. The facilitator will also welcome participants and give them an overview of the day's events, including an agenda and the times for breaks and lunch. The facilitator will share the necessary facility information, such as restroom locations.

The second slide of the presentation has the directions for the Entrance Activity. As the facilitator of this type of experience, I recognize that it may be necessary to review or clarify content from the first session, as many participants might not have had any prior knowledge or

experiences with the information presented. The purpose of this activity, therefore, is to assess the need to review content from the first session as well as to gauge the participants' thoughts about the session. As participants arrive, they will complete a note related to their learning experience during the previous session. The facilitator will inform participants that they can specify whether they would like for the facilitator to address the note individually or with the other participants. The slide indicates that the note can be a comment, concern, question, or suggestion. The facilitator will address any notes that appear to require immediate attention before beginning the session. It is important to note that this presentation is shorter than the first day and only focuses on one theory. This was intentional as to not overwhelm participants and allow them an opportunity to reflect on the new theory and knowledge as it relates to their individual schools.

Encoding/Decoding Theory

This section of the presentation is designed to introduce the participants to Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory. The third slide of the presentation begins this work. On this slide the participants are directed to participate in an Encoding/Decoding activity before receiving any information about the theory. This slide directs the participants to think about films that they have viewed and identify one film to match each description shown. The descriptions are, (a) You really enjoyed watching the film and/or agreed with the writing and overall theme intended by the creators; (b) You enjoyed and/or agreed with some parts of the film, but there were others that you did not enjoy and/or agree with; and (c) You did not enjoy the film and/or disagreed with the overall theme of the film. The participants will be directed to think, write, and discuss their responses. They will also be encouraged to discuss their reasons for choosing the films and identifying them as they did, as this will deepen their experience with the concept of reading a

video. The participants will be able to refer back to this activity when they are introduced to the concepts of a preferred, negotiated, and oppositional reading.

Next, the participants will learn information about Stuart Hall (1932-2014) the founder of the Encoding/Decoding theory. This fourth slide of the presentation contains a picture of Hall, information about him, and a link to a video. The YouTube video is from BBC Newsnight and was developed after his death. The title is "Stuart Hall His obituary and the Stuart Hall Project," and it is 5 minutes and 34 seconds (5:34) in length. Stuart Hall helped pioneer the discussion of the media's role in society and is known as one of the leading experts in media studies. Hall specifically identified an area within media studies known as cultural studies. At this point in the presentation, the facilitator will give each participant a copy of the 1980 chapter titled "Encoding/Decoding" by Stuart Hall. It is a short read, consisting of less than five pages, which explains the concept of Encoding/Decoding. Participants will not be required to read the article during the professional learning experience, but it will serve as a resource.
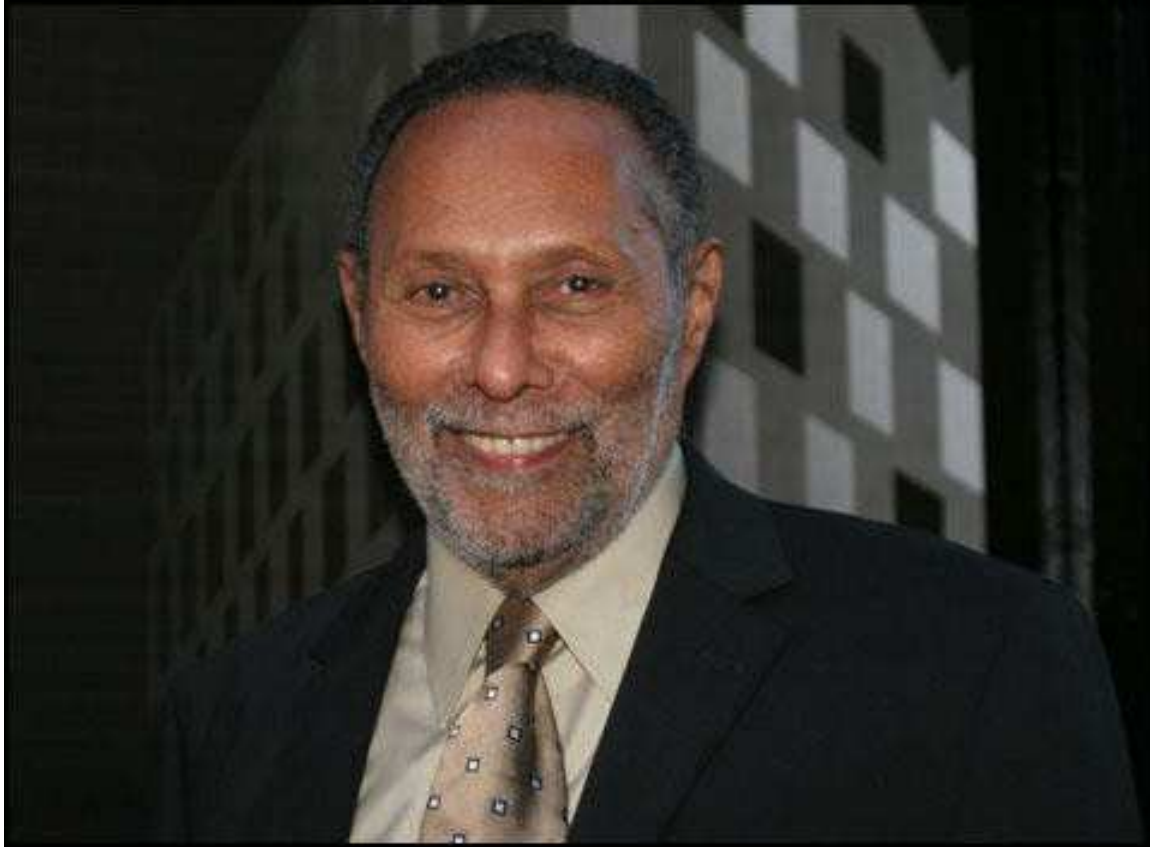
Figure 24. Stuart Hall (1932 – 2014) was born in Kingston, Jamaica.

The next seven slides of the presentation are dedicated to sharing information with the

participants about the Encoding/Decoding theory. Slide five is dedicated to information about

encoding and slide six contains information about decoding. The seventh slide is of Hall's

Encoding/Decoding Model. This graphic will aid in the participants understanding of the theory.

Slide eight lists the three decoding positions, which are dominant/hegemonic/preferred,

negotiated, and oppositional. As a result, each of the next three slides are dedicated to providing

information for one of each of the three positions. As participants are given information about

each position, they will be asked to revisit their movie responses from the introductory

Encoding/Decoding activity. At this time, participants will be given an opportunity to discuss

their reasons for assigning films to certain positions. The facilitator will ensure that all

participants have an understanding of Encoding/Decoding and the three positions prior to

continuing with the presentation.
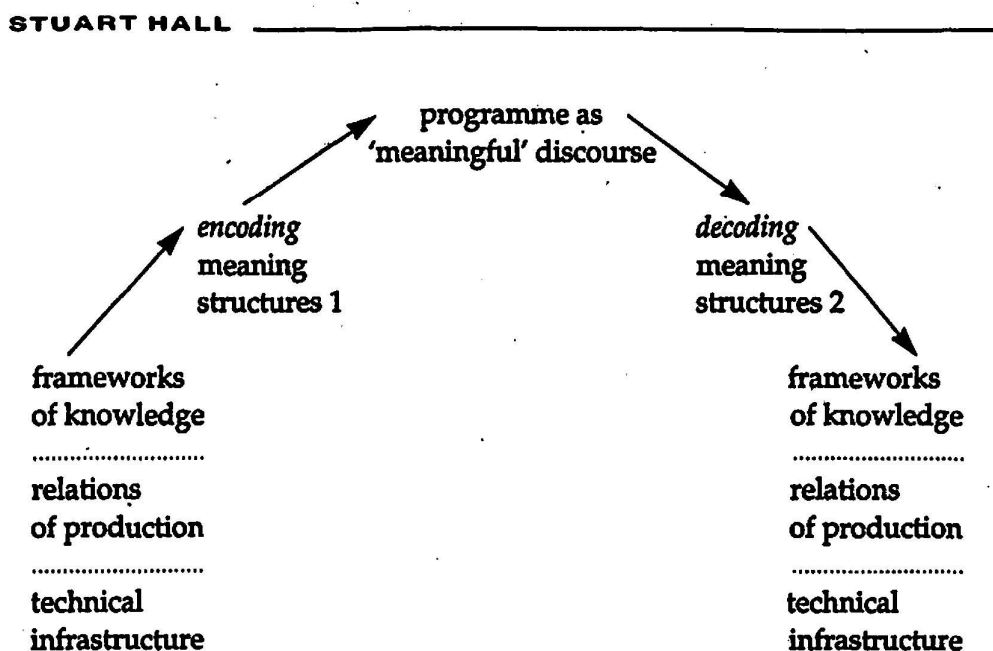
STUART HALL _____

Figure 25. This diagram can be found in the1980 chapter titled *Encoding/decoding* by
Stuart Hall.

On Slide 12, the participants are given one additional opportunity to practice reading a

video before introducing race. The YouTube video is titled "Every Parents must watch this

video!! (Hosted by Jay Shetty)" and is 1 minute and 9 seconds (1:09) in length. It is about a letter

from a principal in Singapore that was written to the parents of his students that were preparing

to take exams. The person discussing the letter in the video is Jay Shetty. Jay is known as a

motivational philosopher, host, interviewer, and producer employed by the Huffington Post. This

video was chosen because the participants will be able to relate to the students taking exams and

will likely provoke a rich discussion about standardized testing. Most of the participants will

likely have a preferred or negotiated reading of the video. The participants will be askedto

reflect on the video, write, and discuss their responses. The participants are scheduled to break for lunch after this activity.

Figure 26. Jay Shetty discussing a letter from a Singapore principal to parents about upcoming exams.

The next section of the presentation begins the participant involvement in pairing the Encoding/Decoding tool with race related videos. Slide 14 displays a link to a video about the black 1%. It is a CNN Money video titled "I'm black and I'm a member of the 1%." This video was chosen for many reasons, but primarily because it speaks to the history of racism as it relates to generational wealth and current racism despite socioeconomic status. The video has some very alarming statistics that should result in rich discussion and reflection from participants. For example, blacks account for only 1.7% of all members of the 1% in the United States. There is a racial wealth gap between blacks and whites in the United States. The average black household has on $.06 of every dollar owned by the typical white household. Moreover, the average black college graduate earns $32,780 compared to the white non-college graduate salary of $80,692. The video highlights some black members of the 1% including Eddie C. Brown, CEO of Brown Capital Management, his wife C. Sylvia Brown, and Sheila C. Johnson, BET co-founder and

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CEO of Salamander Hotels and Resorts. The video is 6 minutes and 59 seconds in length (6:59).

After viewing the video, the participants will be given time to reflect, write, and discuss their

reading in pairs or small groups prior to sharing with the entire group.

Figure 27. Sheila C. Johnson was born on January 25, 1949. She is the co-founder of BET, CEO of Salamander Hotels and Resorts, and the first black woman to acquire at least a one billion dollar net worth.

The next video should force participants to engage further about black-white race

relations. It was chosen to engage the participants further in the conversation about race relations

between blacks and whites. Another reason for choosing this video is because it can be used as

an example for whites as a method for taking action to mitigating racism. In the video a white

female is refusing to sit next to a black male on an airplane. She demands that the flight attendant

move her seat even though the "coach" section of the flight is full. Instead of moving her, the

white female flight attendant addresses the woman's racist behavior and moves the black male to

"first class." There are several versions of the video available. This is a 54 second YouTube

version titled *Stop Racism*. After viewing the video, the participants will be given time to reflect,

write, and discuss their reading in pairs or small groups prior to sharing with the entire group.

Figure 28. Still from a YouTube video "Stop Racism."

      The next video that the participants will view begins to shift the black-white race

conversation to interracial relationships. This will lead into the final two videos featuring an

interracial couple and their biracial daughter, beginning the discussion of race mixing and

biracial people. The 2 minute and 22 second (2:22) YouTube video depicts a segment of a

Discovery video titled "Historic Kiss –The True Story: Star Trek." The video discusses the

planning and execution of the historical first interracial kiss to air on television. It is important to

note that there are some sources that claim that there were other interracial television kisses, but

there are questions about them. For example, it can be debated whether or not the actor's and

actress's lips actually touched. The video details the historical events that were happening in the

United States during the time of the kiss in the 1960s, in which blacks and whites were still

divided in many states. The video shares information about the hateful fan mail that was received

as a result of the kiss as well as the positive letters. It is also mentioned that the show received

negative feedback about the casting of a leading black female character, Uhura, prior to the kiss

airing. After viewing the video, the participants will be given time to reflect, write, and discuss

their reading in pairs or small groups prior to sharing with the entire group.

Figure 29. Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura kiss in 1968 on the television show *Star Trek.*
        The next video is of a Cheerios commercial that aired in 2013. The 1-minute YouTube

video features an interracial couple and their biracial child. This video will provide an

introduction to the discussion of black-white biracial people that will be the focus of the third

day of this professional learning experience. The video received many racist reviews and vulgar

reviews—so much so that the comments section had to be closed. After viewing the video the

participants will be given time to reflect, write, and discuss their reading in pairs or small groups.

Figure 30. The cast from the 2013 controversial Cheerios commercial that featured an
interracial couple and their biracial child.

The final video involves young children viewing the same Cheerios commercial that the

participants viewed in the previous video. The 8 minute and 58 second (8:58) YouTube video is

titled "Kids React to Controversial Cheerios Commercial." The children are asked their opinion,

or in the case of Encoding/Decoding, their reading of the commercial. All of the children have a

preferred reading of the commercial. However, the facilitators of the video explain to the

children that some people have gotten mad about the commercial and ask the children if they

have any idea why. The children do not have any ideas as to why the people are mad about the

video. The facilitators share with the children that it is because of the racial makeup of the family

and the children share their issues with that information. After viewing the video, the participants

will be given time to reflect, write, and discuss their reading in pairs or small groups prior to

sharing with the entire group. The facilitator chose to place this video at the end of the session,

because it is a positive depiction of tolerance. This video also reinforces the fact that race is a

social construct and that racism is taught.

Figure 31. The children that were interviewed in the "Kids React to Controversial Cheerios Commercial" YouTube video.

CHAPTER VII: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE "DAY THREE"

Objectives

> The participants will reflect on their knowledge of the meaning of biracial, tragic mulatto, and media representation of biracial people.
> The participants will acquire knowledge of the history of biracial people in the United States.
> The participants will apply knowledge of concepts, strategies, and theories learned in the previous sessions.
> The participants will develop a product that promotes social justice and equity for their current school.

Outcomes

> The participants will develop an increased awareness of biracial people within their personal and professional lives.
> The participants will be committed to continuous reflection and action as it relates to racial equity.
> The participants will be able to share evidence of their application using the "high theory" learned to mitigate equity challenges within their school.
> The participants will implement their product within their current school.

Introduction

This final day of the professional learning experience is dedicated to the topic of black-white biracial people. The facilitator expects for the participants to use the theories and strategies learned during the first 2 days of the professional learning experience for analyzing and discussing the history, topics, and various forms of media related to biracial individuals. To review, some of the theories and strategies are growth mindset, implicit bias, Critical Race Theory, and Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding.

The presentation begins with an introductory slide that is similar to that from the previous two sessions. The slide contains the presentation title, *Critical Theory and Popular Culture: Preparing School Leaders for the Emerging Majority,* as well as the facilitator's full name. This

slide will be updated to include the facilitator's credentials and contact information. The slide

will be projected for participants as they arrive for the professional learning experience. The

facilitator will also welcome participants and give them an overview of the day's agenda,

including the necessary facility information such as restroom locations.

The second slide of the presentation has the directions for the "Entrance Activity." This is

the same activity that the participants completed on the second day of the professional learning

experience. The purpose of the activity is to allow the facilitator and opportunity to review,

clarify, or answer questions about the content from the previous sessions. As participants arrive,

they will complete a note related to their learning experience during the previous sessions. The

facilitator will inform participants that they can specify whether they would like the facilitator to

address the note individually or with the other participants. The slide indicates that the note can

be a comment, concern, question, or suggestion. The facilitator will address any notes that appear

to require immediate attention.

Biracial People

As I defined in Chapter I, the term biracial means that an individual has parents that are

members of two different races. For this work, specifically this presentation, the focus is on

black-white biracial people. The first video of this presentation is taken from YouTube, is 5

minutes and 15 seconds (5:15) in length, and is entitled "U.S.: Young and Mixed in America |

The New York Times." In the video, an employee of *The New York Times* highlights mixed race

students at The University of Maryland. Laura Wood is a student at the university and the vice

president of the multiracial and biracial student association at the school. The association is

dedicated to promoting multicultural awareness on the campus. The description of the video

reads, "College campuses across the United States are seeing more mixed-race students than ever

before. They are leading a sea of change in how we think about race and ethnicity."

The purpose of this video is to introduce the participants to some of the data that supports

the increase in the biracial population in the United States. This video was taken from YouTube,

is 5 minutes and 15 seconds (5:15) in length, and is titled "U.S.: Young and Mixed in America |

The New York Times." The video that was published in 2011 is primarily composed of the

voices from students at the university. The participants discuss their perspectives on being

biracial, how they define their identity, and validate much of the social and historical experiences

for biracial individuals, as I outlined in Chapter II. For example, one participant talks about the

one drop rule and society's identification of individuals based on their phenotype.

Figure 32. The student pictured on the far right is Laura Wood. Laura is featured in the
video and was a student at The University of Maryland and the Vice President of the
Multiracial and Biracial Association at the time the video was created.

The next video was chosen for similar reasons as the previous video. It also supports

some of the data and societal concepts related to biracial individuals that I identified in Chapters

I and II. For example, the video reminds us that 2010 marked the first time in history that

individuals were able to identify as more than one race on the United States census. The video

also shares data from that census supporting the increasing number of multiracial individuals.

This video was taken from YouTube, is 4 minutes and 27 seconds (4:27) in length, and is entitled "Biracial in America | The New York Times." The video begins with a clip from President Barack Obama giving a speech. In the speech he is talking about his biracial identity and the diversity of his family. The people in the video are students at Rutgers University and members of a group called Fusion. The majority of the video consists of clips of participants sharing personal information during a group meeting. According to the video the group formed to create a support system of shared experiences among multiracial students.

Figure 33. The female pictured is one of the video participants sharing her perspective and experiences being biracial.

Tragic Mulatto

The next section of the presentation will focus on the concept of the "tragic mulatto." The first slide of this section of the presentation direct the participants to answer three questions. The facilitator was intentional in starting the conversation about the concept of the tragic mulatto prior to sharing any information about the stereotype. The questions are (a) What does the term mean? (b) Why was it created? and (c) What are some examples that you identify from media

representation? and (d) Has this term/media representation impacted your views and understanding of biracial people? After answering the questions, the participants will be given time to discuss their responses in pairs or small groups prior to sharing with the entire group. The facilitator will share information with participants about the tragic mulatto character. As I outlined in Chapter III, the role of the tragic mulatto was created through the depiction of biracial individuals in media, and that the tragic mulatto character originated in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Bogle (1973) described "The Tragic Mulatto" as a biracial person (typically a woman) who is torn between a "divided racial inheritance." Simply stated, the tragic mulatto is a person that is confused, unhappy, or even suicidal because he or she does not fit comfortably within society's racial constructs. These individuals experience challenges when trying to navigate society as a biracial person that does not have a distinct white or black phenotype.

The next two slides in this section of the presentation have pictures of the DVD box covers of all of the biracial films analyzed in Chapter III of this work. Also, there is a picture of the DVD box cover of Alex Haley's TV mini-series *Queen* (1993). Queen was not analyzed in Chapter III, but the facilitator chose to include the film because it was released on television and many of the participants may recall watching the film. Additionally, the film features Halle Berry, an Academy Award winning actress that most of the participants will be familiar with. The next slide has links to two videos from the classic film *Imitation of Life* (1934; 1959). This film is likely the most popular for its depiction of the tragic mulatto character, and it will solidify the participants' understanding of the stereotype.
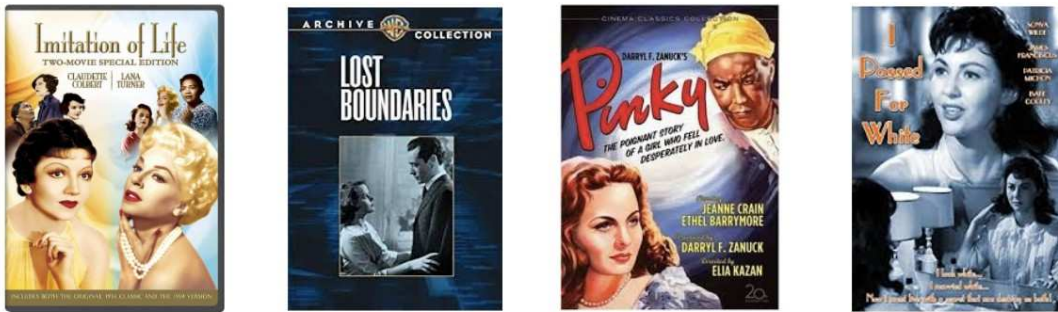
Films with the "Tragic Mulatto" Character Released Between 1934–1960

Figure 34. A screen shot of slide number six in the Google Slides presentation. Each image is of the DVD box cover of a biracial film that is analyzed in Chapter III. The information contained on this slide can be found in the appendix of this work.

Films and TV Mini Series (Queen) with the "Tragic Mulatto" Character Released Between 1993–2013

Figure 35. A screen shot of slide number seven in the Google Slides presentation. Each image is of the DVD box cover of a biracial film. The first image is of the TV mini series Queen that is mentioned in Chapter III, but not analyzed for the purpose of this work. The middle image and the image on the far right are both covers of newer films that were

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analyzed in Chapter III. The information contained on this slide can be found in the appendix of this work.
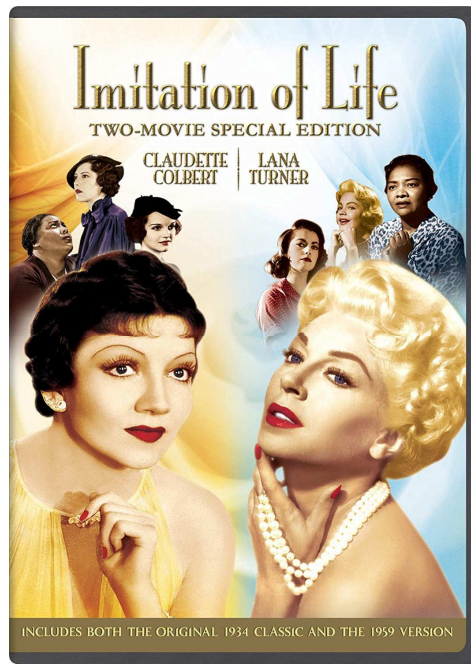
Figure 36. The front of the DVD box cover for the film *Imitation of Life* (1934; 1959).

There are a total of three YouTube videos that the participants will view. All of the video clips are from the 1959 version of the film. The first is 1 minute and 48 seconds (1:48) in length, and is titled "Sarah Jane tries to pass for white – Imitation of Life." This video depicts a tragic mulatto character that has been passing for white while in grade school. Her black mother comes to the classroom to bring her rain boots and exposes her true identity. The young girl becomes very upset and leaves school. She is mad at her mother for being black and does not want to be black.

Figure 37. The tragic mulatto character from the film *Imitation of Life.*

In the next video, the tragic mulatto character is older and she has left home to work and participate in the act of passing. The YouTube video is titled "Imitation of life Sara Jane and Annie last moment" and is 4 minutes and 39 seconds (4:39) long. This video is extremely powerful in that the tragic mulatto wants to deny being half black for no other reason than to live as a white person. Undoubtedly, this was a time in which blacks experienced discrimination, oppression, and the detriment of Jim Crow laws. It is important to note, however, that this character did not need to pass in order to survive physically or economically. In fact, at this point in the film her mother is wealthy and neither of them have to work. Any mother will likely watch this video and feel the sadness that this character's mother must have felt hearing her daughter say that she can no longer communicate with her. In fact, this scene is especially challenging for me as a mother of a biracial child. I cannot imagine my child choosing not to communicate with me because of my race and their desire to deny a part of him to participate in the act of passing.

Figure 38. The tragic mulatto character from the film *Imitation of Life* with her mother.

The final YouTube video is titled "Harrowing scene from Imitation of Life" and is 1

minute and 42 seconds (1:42). This scene involves the tragic mulatto character having a

discussion with her boyfriend that leads to him physically assaulting her. In the scene, the tragic

mulatto is suggesting that they move to another city to live together. He then reveals that he is

aware of her biracial identity and starts to hit her. The scene ends with her on the ground crying.

The purpose of this video is to confirm for the participants that the tragic mulatto character exists

solely because of the deeply-rooted racist views of some whites. Many filmmakers wanted

people to believe that there was something wrong with biracial people; however, in many cases

in film, they do not display tragic mulatto characteristics until the people in their lives experience

challenges associated with their biracial or black identity. After the participants view the films,

the facilitator will allow them an opportunity to reflect and discuss.

Figure 39. The tragic mulatto character in the film *Imitation of Life* lying on the street after being assaulted by her white boyfriend after he found out that she was biracial.

Black-White Biracial Terms

The next slide lists approximately 15 terms, laws, and court cases that are specifically related to black-white biracial people. The participants will be given a matching handout with the terms and definitions or descriptions. The information from this handout will be taken from the content in Chapters I and II of this work. After participants have been given an opportunity to try and complete the handout the facilitator will lead the participants in completing/correcting their answers through a discussion and summary of the terms.

Biracial Videos

In the next section, the participants will view three videos that feature biracial individuals. The purpose of these videos is for the participants to learn about biracial individuals from their perspective and review the CRT tenet the centrality of experiential knowledge. The first YouTube video titled "Mulatto: Mixed Race in America" is 7 minutes and 27 seconds (7:27) long. The video was published in 2010, and the description of the video reads, "Mixed Race Americans talk about how they see themselves racially and the experiences that contributed to

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that identification." It highlights famous biracial people, including President Barack Obama and Mariah Carey. The biracial individuals in the video share their views on multiple topics including the term mulatto, society's perception of them as biracial people, and their experiences with bullying and discrimination. Similar to narratives of other biracial individuals, many of the individuals in the film shared that they discovered that their race was an issue based on society's issues with race. Some of the participants in the video shared that they identified as black as a result of their black phenotype and as a result of society classifying them as black.

Figure 40. A participant from the YouTube video titled "Mulatto: Mixed Race In America."
      The second YouTube video is titled "Biracial Not Black Damn It – Trailer part 1," and it is 4 minutes and 8 seconds (4:08) long. The description of the video reads, "Biracial in America is the fastest growing population under 18, to self-identify has become the message dictated by this new young generation that is proud of being all that they are, not excluding any parts." In the video, many of the participants discuss the idea of being asked to choose one race as their identity. This idea supports the American society's history of the one drop rule. The participants assert that society should acknowledge their biracial identity and not force them to choose or

identity as "other," which has been an option for racial categories on formal documents. They also discuss their experiences and being mistreated by members of the black and white races, being ashamed of their biracial identity, and wanting to be either black or white as a result of society's treatment.

Figure 41. A participant from the video titled "Biracial Not Black Damn It – Trailer part 1."
      The final YouTube video highlighting biracial individuals is titled "Human Race: Being Biracial." It is important to note that most of the video focuses on black-white biracial people, but there is information about biracial and multiracial people of other races. The video is 10 minutes and 5 seconds (10:05) long, and it is a news segment from the Fox 5 New York news station. The video was published in January of 2017, and is thus the most recent of the three biracial videos in this section of the presentation. In fact, the news anchor leading the segment, Simone Boyce, shares that she is biracial. Simone shares that her mother is African-American and her father is Caucasian. She also narrates most of the video in addition to sharing live clips from her interviewees.

The video provides a summary of the evolution of biracial individuals to their present-day experiences, confirms that race is a societal construct, discusses examples of how society did not properly recognize biracial individuals until the 2010 United States Census, and provides data about the rapidly growing population of people with a dual heritage. Moreover, the video includes clips of interviews with members of academia. Two of these individuals are associate professors. Dr. Samuel Roberts, Associate Professor of History, Columbia University and Erica Chito Childs, Associate Professor of Sociology, Hunter College. Ms. Childs is a white female that is married to a black man with biracial children. A timely segment of the video discusses the current racial climate in the United States. Specifically, the host shares data from the Southern Poverty Law Center about the dramatic increase in hate crimes after the November election in 2016. The center reports that there were over 400 reported incidents of targeting minorities across the country between the dates of November 8, 2016 and November 14, 2016. The video also features commentary from the Ethiopian-Irish actress Ruth Negga, who plays the role of Mildred Loving in the movie *Loving* (2016), which highlights the Supreme Court landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case. In her closing, Boyce spoke optimistically of society's progress in recognizing and acceptance of biracial people. She also shared that she was not aware that there were experts on the topic when she was younger.

Figure 42. Actress Ruth Negga that identifies as Irish-Ethiopian and has been quoted as saying "I get very territorial about my identity."

Biracial Literature

The primary purpose of this professional learning experience was to bring awareness to the biracial population, specifically those in P-12 schools, and to equip school leaders with tools and strategies to assist their staff members in gaining awareness of these individuals. With that in mind, the second half of this last day of professional development highlights two articles that were discussed in the literature review of this work. The participants will be directed to reach the articles as they are short and use them in the work session that will be described in the next section.

The first article is "Children of Mixed Race: No Longer Invisible" by Francis Wardle published in the December 1999/January 2000 edition of *Educational Leadership*. This is the flagship publication for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The article is lacking in peer review and is considered non-scholarly; however, it is fitting for the

participants in that they are practitioners and the article was written specifically for them. The article discusses biracial students and juxtaposed their current versus ideal situations in schools.

Wardle (2002) provided recommendations for the increasing biracial population as it relates to teachers, assessing and improving the curriculum, multicultural education, modifying ethnic and racial celebrations, addressing harassment, and promoting anti-bias activities. The author did cite scholarly articles and the article contains several references, making it relevant in the context of an overall limited body of availability.

The second article is "'What are You?' Biracial Children in the Classroom" written by Baxley in 2008. The article was published in the summer edition of *Childhood Education*, the official Journal of the Association for Childhood Education International. The brief article provides resources such as a list of reference books, picture books, adolescent books, and websites that teachers can use to "incorporate culturally responsive practices in their classrooms" (Baxley, 2008 p. 232). The author further identified classroom teaching strategies that support biracial students. In addition to sharing information about the expansion of the biracial population, Baxley explored biracial identity development and history.

Work Session

After reading the articles, the participants will be given directions for this work session. This session will result in the school leaders creating a product that can be implemented in their school or district. Through my experience as a school leader, I have participated in professional learning experiences that were informative and rewarding. In most of these circumstances, I desired the opportunity to reflect on the information that I received and additionally to reflect in a manner in which it could be applied to my current school setting. I allocated this time and designed this work session so that the participants in this professional learning experience would

not have that void. Moreover, I concluded that many school leaders, even those with the best intentions, do not have the time to complete this type of product outside of a designated professional development. The work session will ensure that school leaders have a product that will be shared or implemented with other staff members. Participants will have full autonomy in the creation of the product with the exception of a few requirements. The product must focus on biracial individuals and outlined or setup in the form of a presentation that will be no less than 1 hour in length. The school leaders will have to expose staff members to one of the two articles discussed in the previous section during the presentation. School leaders will be required to include data and information about their current biracial population. They will be encouraged to use video clips relevant to P-12 staff and biracial students. Participants will be encouraged to introduce the staff to one theory in their presentation. The only exceptions that will be made are for school leaders that are certain that they do not have a black-white biracial population in their school. In this case, they will be challenged to create a presentation for a minority group in their school.

Closing Activity

The facilitator will show one final video to close the 3-day professional learning experience. Of all of the films and videos discussed during the sessions, this is by far the best. The TED Talk video is 14 minutes and 11 seconds (14:11) long, and features Mellody Hobson, a Black female graduate of Princeton, President of Ariel Investments, Chair of the Board of Directors of DreamWorks Animation, and wife of Stars Wars creator George Lucas. In the video, Hobson challenges Americans to be "color brave" versus "color blind." She shares interesting data highlighting racial disparities in the United States and her personal experiences

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with race relations. Hobson is in an interracial marriage and has a biracial daughter. At the time

of this writing, this video has received over two million views.

Figure 43. Mellody Hobson is a graduate of Princeton, President of Ariel Investments, Chair of the Board of Directors of DreamWorks Animation, and wife of Stars Wars creator George Lucas.

CHAPTER VIII: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

After reflecting upon this dissertation process, specifically the analysis section, it is my belief that biracial people who struggle with identity do so because society forces them into categories that force them to deny some part of their racial makeup or cultural values. An example of this would be forcing a biracial individual to choose or identify with one racial category on formal documents, such as school registration materials, or within social situations. Many of the characters in the films that played the role of the "tragic mulatto" were seemingly well-adjusted, happy people until forced to choose or identify with only one race within society. This reflection prompted me to think about my interracial marriage and how we sometimes experience awkward moments as a result of our choice to deviate from societal norms. There is normalcy within the confines of our homes or the comfort of family and friends; however, a task as simple as going to the local supermarket can present multiple unpleasant experiences such as stares or frowns from strangers to rudeness from service people. I share this information in order to reiterate my personal commitment to social justice and equity for all people. This led to my identification of the next steps as they relate to awareness, advocacy, and action.

The most immediate form of next steps will likely involve the implementation of the pedagogical project with a pilot group. The ideal group of participants that the project was designed for is school leaders in the form of principal and assistant principals; thus, the ultimate goal is to facilitate the project via school districts and with professional organizations for school administrators. Other educators such as teachers, instructional support staff, and teacher assistants can also benefit from this project. As an assistant principal of a high school with

approximately 200 staff members, I can foresee that leaders would recognize the benefits of

participating in such a project—specifically, those staff members that are department leaders and

members from the leadership and school improvement teams. Another goal is that the awareness

and communication about biracial students through the implementation of the project will enable

school leaders to find value in collecting and analyzing achievement and other data of biracial

students, specifically black-white students. My experience as a public school administrator has

involved the data for black-white biracial students and all other combination of races being

lumped together in one category described as multiracial. This practice must change in order to

obtain any authentic quantitative data related to the achievement of biracial students; researchers

could analyze such data with other subgroup information such as economically advantaged

versus disadvantaged, special education, and suspension rates.

In addition to the implementation of this professional learning experience, it is important

that I continue to reflect on its success, improve the facilitation, and expand the content for

different groups. This task will require me to identify or develop evaluative tools to analyze the

programs strengths and weaknesses. Gusky (2002) stated that an "effective professional

development evaluations requite the collection and analysis of five critical levels of information"

(p. 46). Level one, "Participants' Reactions" and level two "Participants' Learning" could easily

be implemented with my professional learning experience through a brief questionnaire and the

development of a pre-assessment and post-assessment. The school district or organization will

have to be committed beyond the three professional learning experience days in order to collect

and analyze data to achieve a deeper level of program evaluation. Levels three "Organization

Support and Change", four "Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills", and five "Student

Learning Outcomes" will require the organization and participants to participate in a more in-

depth process. These activities might include portfolio development, structured interviews, observations, and a review of data such as student records or meeting minutes.

Aside from awareness in the community of practitioners is the need for awareness amongst scholars. An example of a next step in this arena may involve presenting this information to academics at major conferences of professional organizations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA). While completing this work, I began to conceptualize other projects and potential ideas for publishing. As a researcher with a personal interest in the topic of black-white biracial people, I have an appreciation for all literature and texts that acknowledge this group. As mentioned earlier, the research and literature in this area are sparse; if a text acknowledges this group (specifically films in which the reader is aware that the person is black-white biracial), I see this as positively contributing to the awareness of biracial people and suppression of the one drop rule. In the next section, I will share a few ideas regarding how I might conduct theoretical research about this topic in the future.

An example of how I anticipate extending this work is to gather additional information about the writers, directors, and producers of the films. This research will include answering questions related to their motivation and inspiration, how this related to the guidelines and laws for filmmaking that were present at the time, and the potential risks and implications that resulted in the making of the film. This would likely involve securing and analyzing secondary texts. Another example might include researching the original text—in some cases, a printed text—and making a comparison with the printed text and visual text. This research project may also include an analysis of historical artifacts related to the true events that occurred and resulted in the film. Examples of these films are *Lost Boundaries* (1949) and *Belle* (2013). Lastly, it is important to

note that there are other groups that are equally underrepresented in the literature; as an advocate for social justice for all people, it is likely that I will extend this work to other groups.

The process of analyzing the biracial films in this study was both challenging and rewarding. Utilizing Critical Race Theory to analyze films that contain very overt racist acts stretched my thinking and forced me to remain committed to my moral compass. It was as a result of this experience and the initial stages of the development of the pedagogical project that the "Day Four" of the professional learning experience emerged. It was necessary for participants to experience Days One, Two, and Three of the professional learning experience so that they could be prepared for the in-depth analysis that will occur in Day Four. I completed this type of analysis was completed and described in Chapter III when I analyzed six biracial films using Critical Race Theory (outlined in the literature in Chapter II) and Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding theory (outlined prior to the analyses in Chapter III). This engagement forced me to sharpen my knowledge and application of the six CRT tenets and Encoding/Decoding. This critical process forced me to question my personal values and perceptions of race and racism, as well as the experiences of biracial people. During this process, I changed my reading of one of my longtime favorite films from preferred to oppositional as a result of multiple critical analyses. As I stated earlier, the "Day Four" professional learning experience is an emergent idea; therefore, I did not include the Google Slides presentation, nor did I dedicate an entire chapter to detailing the experience. The plan is to allow school leaders the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of biracial individuals and consider the implications of their work. Participants may be required to participate in individual activities (e.g., homework) outside of the designated meeting times for the professional learning experience. These activities might include reading texts, watching films, or writing an analysis.

Although this dissertation represents only a small contribution to the awareness of biracial students, it still lacks the very information that I have critiqued from other biracial literature. This information—as mentioned several times before—includes academic achievement data. It is my desire to collaborate with experienced educational researchers in order to take on the task of conducting empirical research with black-white biracial students. My preferred reading of this dissertation is as a critical pedagogical practice and that would be suggestive to other researchers and practitioners that are committed to social justice and equity for all people.

APPENDIX A: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY 1 PRESENTATION

Critical Theory and Popular Culture: Preparing School Leaders for the Emerging Biracial Majority

Professional Learning Experience Day One
Quamesha Whitted-Miller, Facilitator

Agenda

Introduction to *Mindset* Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.	Procter & Gamble Commercial Video
Angela Lee Duckworth TED Video	Race IAT Quiz
Gender Bias "Like A Girl" Video	Introduction to Critical Race Theory Tenets
Introduction to Implicit Social Cognition	Jay Smooth Video
Gender-Career IAT Quiz	

Mindset Reflection Activity

1-Think about a time in which you changed your mind/mindset about an idea, issue, or situation.

2-Describe the situation and answer the following questions.

Why did you change your mind?

What factors do you believe played a role in you changing your mind?

What does it mean to have a growth mindset?

Growth Mindset

The *growth mindset* is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.

The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of *growth mindset*.

This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives.

THE RESEARCH OF MINDSET
Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

The message is: You can change your mindset.

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Let's Watch A Video!

TED Video by Angela Lee Duckworth

TED Video Reflection

What did you think about the video?

What are your thoughts about the video as it relates to growth mindset and grit?

How do you think this video might be related to this professional learning experience?

Let's Watch Another Video!

Always Video

"Like A Girl" Video Reflection

What do you think of the video?

How did the video make you feel?

What are some examples of a *fixed mindset* from the video?

What are some examples of a *growth mindset* from the video?

What are some examples of other phrases that are similar to "Like A Girl"?

What is Implicit Social Cognition or Implicit Bias?

Implicit Social Cognition

Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.

Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.

It is thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control.

Let's Watch A Video!

Implicit Bias Video-Kirwan Institute

Let's Watch Another Video!

Implicit Bias Video-Harvard

Let's Take A Test!

Gender-Career IAT

This Implicit Association Test (IAT) often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

Write down what you predict your results will be.

Why do you have this prediction?

Gender-Career IAT Reflection Activity

What were your results?

Was your prediction correct?

If yes, why do you think it was?

If no, why do you think it was not?

How do you feel about your results?

Would you like to change your results?

What are some ways in which you think you can change your results?

LUNCH BREAK

Let's Start By Watching A Video!

Procter & Gamble Commercial Video

"The Talk" Commercial Reflection

What are your thoughts about the commercial?

Who do you think the commercial is intended for? Why?

Why do you think Procter & Gamble created this commercial?

Procter & Gamble News Clip Response

Procter & Gamble Response to "The Talk" Commercial

News Clip Reflection

Did the news clip change your opinion of the commercial?

Why or why not?

Let's Take Another Test!

Race 'Black - White' IAT

This Implicit Association Test (IAT) requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin.

It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

Write down what you predict your results will be.

Why do you have this prediction?

Race IAT Reflection Activity

What were your results?

Was your prediction correct?

If yes, why do you think it was?

If no, why do you think it was not?

How do you feel about your results?
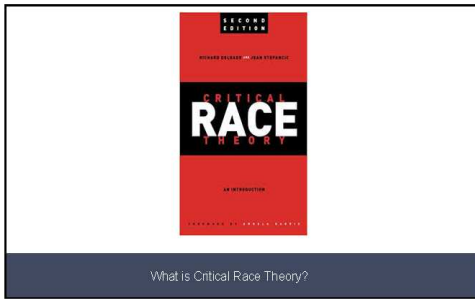
Would you like to change your results?

What are some ways in which you think you can change your results?

Let's Watch Another Video!

A personal story about one woman's experiences with implicit bias.

Implicit Bias Video-True Story

Slide 1

SECOND EDITION

RICHARD DELGADO and JEAN STEFANCIC

CRITICAL
RACE
THEORY

AN INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD BY ANGELA HARRIS

What is Critical Race Theory?

Slide 2

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a tool that has been used to conceptualize, analyze, and challenge race and racism in our society including the educational system.

CRT has origins in legal scholarship that emerged in the late 1970s from Critical Legal Studies (CLS).

Introduced to education in 1995 by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV in the article *Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education*.

Slide 3

The Basic Tenets of CRT

1-Permanence of Race and Racism

2-Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

3-Challenge to the Dominant Ideology

4-Transdisciplinary Perspective

5-Commitment to Social Justice

*Interest Convergence

Slide 4

The Centrality of Race and Racism

Derrick Bell Video

CRT contends that racism in the United States is endemic, ordinary, and a permanent reality of our society.

Racism is normal.

It is seen as a common and often unquestionable part of American life.

Race and racism have contributed to the racial order in the United States.

This tenet can be used in examining how race and racism serve as the primary concepts in which all institutions operate within in the United States.

Slide 5

The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

Voices of Students Video

Critical race theorists support storytelling and privileging the voice of people of color.

They assert that this knowledge of people of color is legitimate and essential in the understanding of racial subordination.

This CRT tenet legitimizes family histories, narratives, parables, poems, and other forms of sharing.

Slide 6

Challenges The Dominant Ideology

Grocery Store Video

CRT challenges the claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy in society.

Interdisciplinary

CRT extends beyond legal discipline including women's studies, sociology, film, psychology, history, education, and many other areas of scholarship.

Critical race theorists insist on a contextual and historical analysis and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Commitment to Social Justice

CRT offers a transformative framework to societal challenges related to racial oppression.

Critical race theorists seek to empower minorities and other oppressed groups.

They are committed to a social justice agenda to empower marginalized groups and eliminate all forms of subordination.

Interest Convergence

According to Bell (1980) this is often considered the sixth tenet.

Examples

Emancipation Proclamation

Brown v. Board of Education

44th President Barack Obama

The interests of Blacks (people of color) as it relates to achieving racial equity will be considered when they converge with the interests of whites in policy-making positions.

Derrick Bell Video

CRT Constructs

Whiteness as Property

Colorblindness

Counterstory

Racial Realism

Jay Smooth

Does this professional learning experience mean that you are vaccinated or cured of racism?

What do you do next?

How can you impact others?

Tonsils versus Dental Hygiene

APPENDIX B: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY 2 PRESENTATION

Critical Theory and Popular Culture: Preparing School Leaders for the Emerging Biracial Majority

Professional Learning Experience Day Two
Quamesha Whitted-Miller, Facilitator

Entrance Activity

Please take an "Entrance Activity" paper to write a reflective note based on your previous learning experience. Your note can be a...

Comment

Concern

Question

Suggestion

Introduction to Encoding/Decoding Activity

Think about films that you have viewed. Identify one film to match each of the descriptions listed below.

1-You really enjoyed watching the film and/or agreed with the writing and overall theme intended by the creators.

2-You enjoyed and/or agreed with some parts of the film, but there were others that you did not enjoy and/or agree with.

3-You did not enjoy the film and/or disagreed with the overall theme of the film.


Stuart Hall

Pioneer of the discussion of the media's role in society.

Known as one of the leading experts in media studies.

Specifically identified an area within media studies known as cultural studies.

Developed the Encoding/Decoding theory in 1973.

BBC Stuart Hall Informational Video

What is Encoding?

The encoder is the producer.

The production of the message.

A system of coded meanings that the sender creates with knowledge of the manner in which the audience will comprehend.

What is Decoding?

The decoder is the receiver.

How the message is interpreted or understood?

Can be constructed in one of three positions.

Creating meaning of a message in a manner that makes sense to you.

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Encoding/Decoding Model
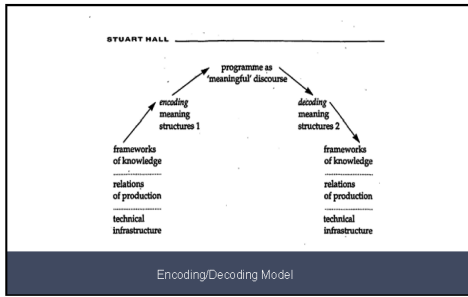
Three Decoding Positions

1-Dominant/Hegemonic/Preferred

2-Negotiated

3-Oppositional

Dominant Hegemonic Preferred

The receiver accepts the meaning exactly as it was intended from the sender.

The sender and the receiver share the dominant ideologies and cultural biases.

Negotiated

The receiver does not accept all of the elements that fit a preferred reading.

The receiver may have an oppositional reading of some parts, but not totally.

Oppositional

The receiver rejects what a preferred reading accepts.

The receiver understands the dominant messages but decodes them in an oppositional way.

Let's Apply Our Knowledge!

Letter From The Principal Video

Watch the video and determine your reading/position using the Encoding/Decoding theory.

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LUNCH BREAK

Let's watch another video!

The Black 1% Video

Watch the video and determine your reading/ position using the Encoding/Decoding theory.

Let's watch another video!

Airline Video

Watch the video and determine your reading/ position using the Encoding/Decoding theory.

Let's Watch Another Video!

Discovery Kiss Video

Watch the video and write your reading/position using the Encoding/Decoding theory.

Let's Watch Another Video!

Cheerios Commercial Video

Watch the video and write your reading/position using the Encoding/Decoding theory.

Let's Watch The Final Video!

Cheerios Commercial Decoding Video

It is not necessary to write your reading of this video.

However, we will discuss how your reading compared to the viewers in this video.

Critical Theory and Popular Culture: Preparing School Leaders for the Emerging Biracial Majority

Professional Learning Experience Day Three
Quamesha Whitted-Miller, Facilitator

Entrance Activity

Please take an "Entrance Activity" paper to write a reflective note based on your previous learning experience. Your note can be a...

Comment

Concern

Question

Suggestion

Pop Quiz!

Biracial Defined By Biracial Individuals

Define the term biracial.

Two more questions!

Biracial Media Individuals

What images come to mind when you think of Black-White biracial people?

Where do these images come from?

Tragic Mulatto

What does this term mean?

Why was it created?

What are some examples that you can identify from media representation?

Has this term/media representation impacted your views and understanding of biracial people?

Films with the "Tragic Mulatto" Character Released Between 1934-1960

Films and TV Mini Series (Queen) with the "Tragic Mulatto" Character Released Between 1993-2013
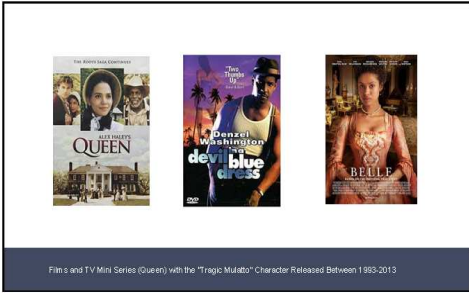
Tragic Mulatto

Passing In Grade School

Passing As An Adult

Passing While Dating

Important Terms Related to Black-White Biracial

Biracial	Passing
Fancy Girls	Placage
Hypodescent (One Drop Rule)	Plessy v. Ferguson
Loving v. Virginia	Racial Integrity Act 1924
Micegenation	Quadroon ¼
Mulatto ½	Quadroon Balls
Multiracial	Tragic Mulatto
Octoroon ⅛	

Let's Watch A Video!

Mulatto: Mixed Race In America Video

What are your thoughts about the video as it relates to the "tragic mulatto"?

Does the video (or any information thus far) stretch your thinking or prompt you to change your responses to the questions from the pop quiz?

Let's Watch Another Video!

Biracial Not Black Video

What are your thoughts about the video as it relates to the "tragic mulatto"?

Does the video (or any information thus far) stretch your thinking or prompt you to change your responses to the questions from the pop quiz?

Let's Watch Another Video!

Human Race: Being Biracial

What are your thoughts on the video?

Do you have any new or different thoughts or reactions?

LUNCH BREAK

Let's Read An Article!

Children of Mixed Race - No Longer Invisible
Francis Wardle
1999/2000

Read the article and highlight and make notes about information that is relevant to your position and school or school district.

Let's Read An Article!

"What Are You?" Biracial Children in the Classroom
Traci P. Baxley
2008

Read the article and highlight and make notes about information that is relevant to your position and school or school district.

Work Session

Using the knowledge and information that you have obtained during this professional learning experience to create a product to use at your school or within your school district.

The only requirement is that it promotes social justice and equity, so you have full autonomy in the creation.

The Final Video!

Color Blind or Color Brave?

Which will you choose?

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